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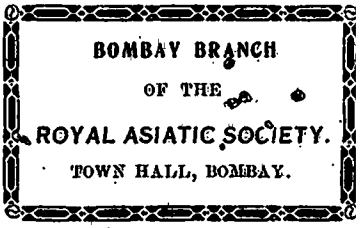

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FINAL MEMORIALS

OF

CHARLES LAMB;

CONSISTING

CHIEFLY OF HIS LETTERS NOT BEFORE PUBLISHED, WITH SKETCHES OF SOME OF HIS COMPANIONS.

BY

THOMAS NOON TALFOURD,

ONE OF HIS EXECUTORS.

20373

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL I.

ROYAL ... OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ... PLATIC ...

LONDON:

EDWARD MOXON, DOVER STREET.

1848.

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TO

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, Esq., D.C.L.,

POET LAUREATE,

THESE FINAL MEMORIALS

OF ONE WHO CHERISHED HIS FRIENDSHIP AS A COMFORT AMIDST GRIEFS AND A GLORY AMIDST DEPRESSIONS,

ARE, WITH AFFECTION AND RESPECT,

INSCRIBED

BY ONE WHOSE PRIDE IS TO HAVE BEEN IN OLD TIME HIS EARNEST ADMIRER,

AND ONE OF WHOSE FONDEST WISHES IS

THAT HE MAY BE LONG SPARED TO ENJOY FAME, RARELY ACCORDED TO THE LIVING.

PREFACE.

NEARLY twelve years have elapsed since the Letters of Charles Lamb, accompanied by such slight sketch of his Life as might link them together, and explain the circumstances to which they refer, were given to the world. In the Preface to that work, reference was made to letters yet remaining unpublished, and to a period when a more complete estimate might be formed of the singular and delightful character of the writer than was there presented. That period has arrived. Several of his friends, who might possibly have felt a moment's pain at the publication of some of those effusions of kindness, in which they are sportively mentioned, have been removed by death; and the

dismissal of the last, and to him the dearest of all, his sister, while it has brought to her the repose she sighed for ever since she lost him, has released his biographer from a difficulty which has hitherto prevented a due appreciation of some of his noblest qualities. Her most lamentable, but most innocent agency in the event which consigned her for life to his protection, forbade the introduction of any letter, or allusion to any incident, which might ever, in the long and dismal twilight of consciousness which she endured, shock her by the recurrence of long past and terrible sorrows; and the same consideration for her induced the suppression of every passage which referred to the malady with which she was through life at intervals afflicted. Although her death had removed the objection to a reference to her intermittent suffering, it still left a momentous question, whether even then, when no relative remained to be affected by the disclosure, it would be right to unveil the dreadful calamity which marked one of its earliest visitations, and which, though known to

most of those who were intimate with the surviving sufferers, had never been publicly associated with their history. When, however, I reflected that the truth, while in no wise affecting the gentle excellence of one of them, casts new and solemn lights on the character of the other; that while his frailties have received an ample share of that indulgence which he extended to all human weaknesses, their chief exciting cause has been hidden; that his moral strength and the extent of his self-sacrifice have been hitherto unknown to the world; I felt that to develope all which is essential to the just appreciation of his rare excellence, was due both to him and to the public. While I still hesitated as to the extent of disclosure needful for this purpose, my lingering doubts were removed by the appearance of a full statement of the melancholy event, with all the details capable of being collected from the newspapers of the time, in the "British Quarterly Review," and the diffusion of the passage, extracted thence, through several other journals. After this

publication, no doubt could remain as to the propriety of publishing the letters of Lamb on this event, eminently exalting the characters of himself and his sister, and enabling the reader to judge of the sacrifice which followed it.

I have also availed myself of the opportunity of introducing some letters, the objection to publishing which has been obviated by the same great healer, Time; and of adding others which I deemed too trivial for the public eye, when the whole wealth of his letters lay before me, collected by Mr. Moxon from the distinguished correspondents of Lamb, who kindly responded to his request for permission to make the public sharers in their choice epistolary treasures. The appreciation which the letters already published, both in this country and in America—perhaps even more remarkable in America than in England—have attained, and the interest which the lightest fragments of Lamb's correspondence, which have accidentally appeared in other quarters, have excited, convince me that some letters which I

withheld, as doubting their worthiness of the public eye, will not now be unwelcome. There is, indeed, scarcely a note—a *notelet*—(as he used to call his very little letters) Lamb ever wrote, which has not some tinge of that quaint sweetness, some hint of that peculiar union of kindness and whim, which distinguish him from all other poets and humorists. I do not think the reader will complain that—with some very slight exceptions, which personal considerations still render necessary—I have made him a partaker of *all* the epistolary treasures which the generosity of Lamb's correspondents placed at Mr. Moxon's disposal.

When I first considered the materials of this work, I purposed to combine them with a new edition of the former volumes; but the consideration that such a course would be unjust to the possessors of those volumes induced me to present them to the public in a separate form. In accomplishing that object, I have felt the difficulty of connecting the letters so as to render their attendant circumstances intelligible, without falling

into repetition of passages in the previous biography. My attempt has been to make these volumes subsidiary to the former, and yet complete in themselves; but I fear its imperfection will require much indulgence from the reader. The italics and capitals used in printing the letters are always those of the writer; and the little passages sometimes prefixed to letters, have been printed as in the originals.

In venturing to introduce some notices of Lamb's deceased companions, I have been impelled partly by a desire to explain any allusion in the letters which might be misunderstood by those who are not familiar with the fine vagaries of Lamb's affection, and partly by the hope of giving some faint notion of the entire circle with which Lamb is associated in the recollection of a few survivors.

T. N. T.

LONDON,
July, 1848.

FINAL MEMORIALS

OF

CHARLES LAMB.

CHAPTER I.

LETTERS OF LAMB TO COLERIDGE, IN THE SPRING AND SUMMER OF 1796.

In the year 1795, Charles Lamb resided with his father, mother, and sister, in lodgings at No. 7, Little Queen Street, Holborn. The father was rapidly sinking into dotage; the mother suffered under an infirmity which deprived her of the use of her limbs; and the sister not only undertook the office of daily and nightly attendance on her mother, but sought to add by needle work to their slender resources. Their income then consisted of an annuity which Mr. Lamb the elder derived from the old Bencher, Mr. Salt, whom he had

faithfully served for many years; Charles's salary, which, being that of a clerk of three years' standing in the India House, could have been but scanty; and a small payment made for board by an old maiden aunt, who resided with them. In this year Lamb, being just twenty years of age, began to write verses,—partly incited by the example of his only friend, Coleridge, whom he regarded with as much reverence as affection, and partly inspired by an attachment to a young lady residing in the neighbourhood of Islington, who is commemorated in his early verses as "the fair-haired maid." How his love prospered we cannot ascertain; but we know how nobly that love, and all hope of the earthly blessings attendant on such an affection, were resigned on the catastrophe which darkened the following year. In the meantime, his youth was lonely—rendered the more so by the recollection of the society of Coleridge, who had just left London—of Coleridge in the first bloom of life and genius, unshaded by the mysticism which it afterwards glorified—full of boundless ambition, love, and hope! There was a tendency to insanity in his family, which had been more than once developed in his sister; and it was no matter of

surprise that in the dreariness of his solitude it fell upon him; and that, at the close of the year, he was subjected for a few weeks to the restraint of the insane. The wonder is that, amidst all the difficulties, the sorrows, and the excitements of his succeeding forty years, it never recurred. Perhaps the true cause of this remarkable exemption—an exemption the more remarkable when his afflictions are considered in association with one single frailty—will be found in the sudden claim made on his moral and intellectual nature by a terrible exigency, and by his generous answer to that claim; so that a life of self-sacrifice was rewarded by the preservation of unclouded reason.

The following letter to Coleridge, then residing at Bristol, which is undated, but which is proved by circumstances to have been written in the spring of 1796, and which is probably the earliest of Lamb's letters which have been preserved, contains his own account of this seizure. Allusion to the same event will be perceived in two letters of the same year, after which no reference to it appears in his correspondence, nor can any be remembered in his conversations with his dearest friends.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

Dear C——, make yourself perfectly easy about May. I paid his bill when I sent your clothes. I was flush of money, and I am so still to all the purposes of a single life; so give yourself no further concern about it. The money would be superfluous to me if I had it.

When Southey becomes as modest as his predecessor Milton, and publishes his Epics in duodecimo, I will read 'em; a guinea a book is somewhat exorbitant, nor have I the opportunity of borrowing the work. The extracts from it in the Monthly Reviews, and the short passages in your Watchman, seem to me much superior to anything in his partnership account with Lovell. Your poems I shall procure forthwith. There were noble lines in what you inserted in one of your numbers, from "Religious Musings;" but I thought them elaborate. I am somewhat glad you have given up that paper; it must have been dry, unprofitable, and of dissonant mood to your disposition. I wish you success in all your undertakings, and am glad to hear you are employed

about the "Evidences of Religion." There is need of multiplying such books a hundredfold in this philosophical age, to *prevent* converts to atheism, for they seem too tough disputants to meddle with afterwards.

Le Grice is gone to make puns in Cornwall. He has got a tutorship to a young boy living with his mother, a widow-lady. He will, of course, initiate him quickly in "whatsoever things are lovely, honourable, and of good report." Coleridge! I know not what suffering scenes you have gone through at Bristol. My life has been somewhat diversified of late. The six weeks that finished last year and began this, your very humble servant spent very agreeably in a madhouse, at Hoxton. I am got somewhat rational now, and don't bite any one. But mad I was! And many a vagary my imagination played with me, enough to make a volume, if all were told. My sonnets I have extended to the number of nine since I saw you, and will some day communicate to you. I am beginning a poem in blank verse, which, if I finish, I publish. White is on the eve of publishing (he took the hint from Vortigern) "Original Letters of Falstaff, Shallow," &c., a copy you shall have

when it comes out. They are without exception the best imitations I ever saw. Coleridge! it may convince you of my regards for you when I tell you my head ran on you in my madness, as much almost as on another person, who I am inclined to think was the more immediate cause of my temporary frenzy.

The Sonnet I send you has small merit as poetry; but you will be curious to read it when I tell you it was written in my prison-house in one of my lucid intervals.

TO MY SISTER.

If from my lips some angry accents fell,
Peevish complaint, or harsh reproof unkind,
'Twas but the error of a sickly mind
And troubled thoughts, clouding the purer well,
And waters clear, of Reason; and for me
Let this my verse the poor atonement be—
My verse, which thou to praise wert e'er inclined
Too highly, and with a partial eye to see
No blemish. Thou to me didst ever show
Kindest affection; and wouldst oft-times lend
An ear to the desponding love-sick lay,
Weeping my sorrows with me, who repay
But ill the mighty debt of love I owe,
Mary, to thee, my sister and my friend.

With these lines, and with that sister's kindest

remembrances to C——, I conclude. Yours sincerely, LAMB.

Your "Conciones ad Populum" are the most eloquent politics that ever came in my way.

Write when convenient—not as a task, for here is nothing in this letter to answer.

We cannot send our remembrances to Mrs. C., not having seen her, but, believe me, our best good wishes attend you both.

My civic and poetic compliments to Southey if at Bristol;—why, he is a very Leviathan of Bards —the small minnow, I!

In the spring of this year, Coleridge proposed the association of those first efforts of the young clerk in the India House, which he had prompted and praised, with his own, in a new edition of his Poems, to which Mr. Charles Lloyd also proposed to contribute. The following letter comprises Sonnets transmitted to Coleridge for this purpose, accompanied by remarks so characteristic as to induce the hope that the reader will forgive the introduction of these small gems of verse which were published in due course, for the sake of the original setting.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

I am in such violent pain with the headache, that I am fit for nothing but transcribing, scarce for that. When I get your poems, and the "Joan of Arc," I will exercise my presumption in giving you my opinion of 'em. The mail does not come in before to-morrow (Wednesday) morning. The following Sonnet was composed during a walk down into Hertfordshire early in last summer:—

The Lord of Light shakes off his drowsyhed,*
Fresh from his couch up springs the lusty sun,
And girds himself his mighty race to run;
Meantime, by truant love of rambling led
I turn my back on thy detested walls,
Proud city, and thy sons I leave behind
A selfish, sordid, money-getting kind,
Who shut their ears when holy Freedom calls.
I pass not thee so lightly, humble spire,
That mindes me of many a pleasure gone,
Of merriest days of Love and Islington,
Kindling anew the flames of past desire;
And I shall muse on thee, slow journeying on,
To the green plains of pleasant Hertfordshire.

The last line is a copy of Bowles's, "To the green hamlet in the peaceful plain." Your ears

* "Drowsyhed" I have met with, I think, in Spenser. 'Tis an old thing, but it rhymes with led, and rhyming covers a multitude of licences.—C. Lamb's Manuscripts.

are not so very fastidious; many people would not like words so prosaic and familiar in a Sonnet as Islington and Hertfordshire. The next was written within a day or two of the last, on revisiting a spot where the scene was laid of my first Sonnet "that mocked my step with many a lonely glade."

When last I roved these winding wood-walks green,
Green winding walks, and shady pathways sweet;
Oft-times would Anna seek the silent scene,
Shrouding her beauties in the lone retreat.
No more I hear her footsteps in the shade;
Her image only in these pleasant ways
Meets me self-wandering, where in happier days
I held free converse with my fair-haired maid.
I passed the little cottage which she loved,
The cottage which did once my all contain;
It spake of days that ne'er must come again;
Spake to my heart, and much my heart was moved.
Now "Fair befal thee, gentle maid," said I;
And from the cottage turned me with a sigh.

The next retains a few lines from a Sonnet of mine which you once remarked had no "body of thought" in it. I agree with you, but have preserved a part of it, and it runs thus. I flatter myself you will like it:—

A timid grace sits trembling in her eye,
As loth to meet the rudeness of men's sight;
Yet shedding a delicious lunar light,

That steeps in kind oblivion's ecstacy
The care-crazed mind, like some still melody:
Speaking most plain the thoughts which do possess
Her gentle sprite, peace and meek quietness,
And innocent loves,* and maiden purity:
A look whereof might heal the cruel smart
Of changed friends; or Fortune's wrongs unkind;
Might to sweet deeds of mercy move the heart
Of him who hates his brethren of mankind:
Turned are those lights from me, who fondly yet
Past joys, vain loves, and buried hopes regret.

The next and last I value most of all. 'Twas composed close upon the heels of the last, in that very wood I had in mind when I wrote—"Methinks how dainty sweet."

We were two pretty babes, the youngest she,
The youngest, and the loveliest far, I ween,
And Innocence her name. The time has been
We two did love each other's company;
Time was, we two had wept to have been apart:
But when, with show of seeming good beguil'd,
I left the garb and manners of a child,
And my first love for man's society,
Defiling with the world my virgin heart—
My loved companion dropt a tear, and fled,
And hid in deepest shades her awful head.
Beloved! who shall tell me where thou art—
In what delicious Eden to be found—
That I may seek thee the wide world around?

* Cowley uses this phrase with a somewhat different meaning. I meant, loves of relatives, friends, &c.—C. Lamb's Manuscripts.

Since writing it, I have found in a poem by Hamilton of Bangor, these two lines to "Happiness."

> Nun, sober and devout, where art thou fled
> To hide in shades thy meek contented head?

Lines eminently beautiful; but I do not remember having read them previously, for the credit of my ten and eleven lines. Parnell has two lines (which probably suggested the above) to "Contentment."

> Whither, ah whither art thou fled
> To hide thy meek contented * head?

Cowley's exquisite "Elegy on the death of his friend Harvey," suggested the phrase of "we two."

> Was there a tree that did not know
> The love betwixt us two?

So much for acknowledged plagiarisms, the confession of which I know not whether it has more of vanity or modesty in it. As to my blank verse, I am so dismally slow and sterile of ideas (I speak from my heart) that I much question if it will ever come to any issue. I have hitherto only hammered out a few independent, uncon-

* An odd epithet for Contentment in a poet so poetical as Parnell.—C. Lamb's Manuscripts.

nected snatches, not in a capacity to be sent. I am very thankful. I have one more favour to beg of you, that you never mention Mr. May's affair in any sort, much less *think* of repaying. Are we not flocci-nauci-what-d'ye-call-'em-ists? We have just learned that my poor brother has had a sad accident, a large stone blown down by yesterday's high wind has bruised his leg in a most shocking manner; he is under the care of Cruikshanks. Coleridge! there are 10,000 objections against my paying you a visit at Bristol; it cannot be else; but in this world it's better not to think too much of pleasant possibles, that we may not be out of humour with present insipids. Should anything bring you to London, you will recollect No. 7, Little Queen Street, Holborn.

I shall be too ill to call on Wordsworth myself, but will take care to transmit him his poem, when I have read it. I saw Le Grice the day before his departure, and mentioned incidentally his "teaching the young idea how to shoot." Knowing the probability there is of people having a propensity to pun in his company, you will not wonder that we both stumbled on the same pun at once, he eagerly anticipating me,—"he would

teach him to shoot." Poor Le Grice! if wit alone could entitle a man to respect, &c., he has written a very witty little pamphlet lately, satirical upon college declamations. When I send White's book, I will add that. I am sorry there should be any difference between you and Southey. "Between you two there should be peace," tho' I must say I have borne him no good will since he spirited you away from among us. What is become of Moschus? You 've sported some of his sublimities, I see, in your Watchman. Very decent things. So much for to-night from your afflicted, headachey, sore-throatey, humble servant,

C. LAMB.

Tuesday night. — Of your Watchman, the Review of Burke was the best prose. I augured great things from the first number. There is some exquisite poetry interspersed. I have re-read the extract from the "Religious Musings," and retract whatever invidious there was in my censure of it as elaborate. There are times when one is not in a disposition thoroughly to relish good writing. I have re-read it in a more favourable moment, and hesitate not to pronounce it sublime.

If there be anything in it approaching to tumidity (which I meant not to infer; by elaborate I meant simply laboured), it is the gigantic hyperbole by which you describe the evils of existing society; "Snakes, lions, hyenas, and behemoths," is carrying your resentment beyond bounds. The pictures of "The Simoom," of "Frenzy and Ruin," of "The "Whore of Babylon," and "The Cry of Foul Spirits disherited of Earth," and "the strange beatitude" which the good man shall recognise in heaven, as well as the particularising of the children of wretchedness (I have unconsciously included every part of it), form a variety of uniform excellence. I hunger and thirst to read the poem complete. That is a capital line in your sixth number—

"This dark, frieze-coated, hoarse, teeth-chattering month."

They are exactly such epithets as Burns would have stumbled on, whose poem on the ploughed-up daisy you seem to have had in mind. Your complaint that of your readers some thought there was too much, some too little original matter in your numbers, reminds me of poor dead Parsons in the "Critic." "Too little incident! Give me leave to tell you, sir, there is too much incident." I had like to have forgot thanking you for that exquisite

little morsel, the first Sclavonian Song. The expression in the second,—"more happy to be unhappy in hell;" is it not very quaint? Accept my thanks, in common with those of all who love good poetry, for "The Braes of Yarrow." I congratulate you on the enemies you must have made by your splendid invective against the barterers in human flesh and sinews. Coleridge! you will rejoice to hear that Cowper is recovered from his lunacy, and is employed on his translation of the Italian, &c. poems of Milton for an edition where Fuseli presides as designer. Coleridge! to an idler like myself, to write and receive letters are both very pleasant; but I wish not to break in upon your valuable time by expecting to hear very frequently from you. Reserve that obligation for your moments of lassitude, when you have nothing else to do; for your loco-restive and all your idle propensities, of course, have given way to the duties of providing for a family. The mail is come in, but no parcel; yet this is Tuesday. Farewell, then, till to-morrow, for a niche and a nook I must leave for criticisms. By the way I hope you do not send your own only copy of Joan of Arc; I will in that case return it immediately.

Your parcel *is* come; you have been *lavish* of your presents.

Wordsworth's poem I have hurried through, not without delight. Poor Lovell! my heart almost accuses me for the light manner I spoke of him above, not dreaming of his death. My heart bleeds for your accumulated troubles; God send you through 'em with patience. I conjure you dream not that I will ever think of being repaid; the very word is galling to the ears. I have read all your "Religious Musings" with uninterrupted feelings of profound admiration. You may safely rest your fame on it. The best remaining things are what I have before read, and they lose nothing by recollection of your manner of reciting them, for I too bear in mind "the voice, the look," of absent friends, and can occasionally mimic their manner for the amusement of those who have seen 'em. Your impassioned manner of recitation I can recall at any time to mine own heart and to the ears of the bystanders. I rather wish you had left the monody on Chatterton concluding as it did abruptly. It had more of unity. The conclusion of your "Religious Musings" I fear will entitle you to the reproof of your beloved woman, who wisely

will not suffer your fancy to run riot, but bids you walk humbly with your God. The very last words, "I exercise my young noviciate thought in ministeries of heart-stirring song," though not now new to me, cannot be enough admired. To speak politely, they are a well-turned compliment to Poetry. I hasten to read "Joan of Arc," &c. I have read your lines at the beginning of second book: they are worthy of Milton; but in my mind yield to your "Religious Musings." I shall read the whole carefully, and in some future letter take the liberty to particularise my opinions of it. Of what is new to me among your poems next to the "Musings," that beginning "My Pensive Sara" gave me most pleasure: the lines in it I just alluded to are most exquisite; they made my sister and self smile, as conveying a pleasing picture of Mrs. C. checking your wild wanderings, which we were so fond of hearing you indulge when among us. It has endeared us more than anything to your good lady, and your own self-reproof that follows delighted us. 'Tis a charming poem throughout (you have well remarked that charming, admirable, exquisite are the words expressive of feelings more than conveying of ideas,

else I might plead very well want of room in my paper as excuse for generalising). I want room to tell you how we are charmed with your verses in the manner of Spenser, &c., &c., &c., &c., &c. I am glad you resume the Watchman. Change the name; leave out all articles of news, and whatever things are peculiar to newspapers, and confine yourself to ethics, verse, criticism—or rather do not confine yourself. Let your plan be as diffuse as the "Spectator," and I 'll answer for it the work prospers. If I am vain enough to think I can be a contributor, rely on my inclinations. Coleridge! in reading your "Religious Musings," I felt a transient superiority over you. I *have* seen Priestly. I love to see his name repeated in your writings. I love and honour him almost profanely. You would be charmed with his *Sermons*, if you never read them. You have doubtless read his books illustrative of the doctrine of Necessity. Prefixed to a late work of his in answer to Paine, there is a preface giving an account of the man, of his services to men, written by Lindsey, his dearest friend, well worth your reading.

Tuesday eve.—Forgive my prolixity, which

is yet too brief for all I could wish to say. God give you comfort, and all that are of your household! Our loves and best good wishes to Mrs. C.

C. LAMB.

The parcel mentioned in the last letter, brought the "Joan of Arc," and a request from Coleridge, that Lamb would freely criticise his poems with a view to their selection and correction for the contemplated volume. The reply is contained in the following letter which, written on several days, begins at the extreme top of the first page, without any ceremony of introduction, and is comprised in three sheets and a bit of foolscap.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

With "Joan of Arc" I have been delighted, amazed; I had not presumed to expect anything of such excellence from Southey. Why the poem is alone sufficient to redeem the character of the age we live in from the imputation of degenerating in Poetry, were there no such beings extant as Burns, and Bowles, Cowper, and ——; fill up the blank how you please; I say nothing. The subject is well chosen. It opens well. To

become more particular, I will notice in their order a few passages that chiefly struck me on perusal. Page 26, "Fierce and terrible Benevolence!" is a phrase full of grandeur and originality. The whole context made me feel *possessed*, even like Joan herself. Page 28, "It is most horrible with the keen sword to gore the finely-fibred human frame," and what follows, pleased me mightily. In the 2nd Book, the first forty lines in particular are majestic and high-sounding. Indeed the whole vision of the Palace of Ambition and what follows are supremely excellent. Your simile of the Laplander, "By Nieni lake, or Balda Zhiok, or the mossy stone of Solfar-Kapper," * will bear comparison with any in Milton for fulness of circumstance and lofty-pacedness of versification. Southey's similes, though many of 'em are capital, are all inferior. In one of his books, the simile of the oak in the storm occurs, I think, four times. To return; the light in which you view the heathen deities is accurate and beautiful. Southey's personifications

* Lapland mountains. The verses referred to are published in Mr. Coleridge's Poem entitled "The Destiny of Nations: a Vision."

in this book are so many fine and faultless pictures. I was much pleased with your manner of accounting for the reason why monarchs take delight in war. At the 447th line you have placed Prophets and Enthusiasts cheek by jowl, on too intimate a footing for the dignity of the former. Necessarian-like speaking, it is correct. Page 98, "Dead is the Douglas! cold thy warrior frame, illustrious Buchan," &c., are of kindred excellence with Gray's "Cold is Cadwallo's tongue," &c. How famously the maid baffles the Doctors, Seraphic and Irrefragable, "with all their trumpery!" The procession, the appearance of the Maid, of the Bastard Son of Orleans and of Tremouille, are full of fire and fancy, and exquisite melody of versification. The personifications from line 303 to 309, in the heat of the battle, had better been omitted; they are not very striking, and only encumber. The converse which Joan and Conrade hold on the banks of the Loire is altogether beautiful. Page 313, the conjecture that in dreams "all things are that seem," is one of those conceits which the Poet delights to admit into his creed—a creed, by the way, more marvellous and mystic than ever

Athanasius dreamed of. Page 315, I need only *mention* those lines ending with "She saw a serpent gnawing at her heart!" They are good imitative lines, "he toiled and toiled, of toil to reap no end, but endless toil and never-ending woe;" 347 page. Cruelty is such as Hogarth might have painted her. Page 361, all the passage about Love (where he seems to confound conjugal love with creating and preserving love) is very confused, and sickens me with a load of useless personifications; else that ninth Book is the finest in the volume—an exquisite combination of the ludicrous and the terrible: I have never read either, even in translation, but such I conceive to be the manner of Dante or Ariosto. The tenth Book is the most languid. On the whole, considering the celerity wherewith the poem was finished, I was astonished at the unfrequency of weak lines. I had expected to find it verbose. Joan, I think, does too little in battle; Dunois perhaps the same; Conrade too much. The anecdotes interspersed among the battles refresh the mind very agreeably, and I am delighted with the many passages of simple pathos abounding throughout the poem, passages which the author of "Crazy

Kate" might have written. Has not Master Southey spoke very slightingly, in his preface, and disparagingly of Cowper's Homer? What makes him reluctant to give Cowper his fame? And does not Southey use too often the expletives "did," and "does?" They have a good effect at times, but are too inconsiderable, or rather become blemishes, when they mark a style. On the whole, I expect Southey one day to rival Milton: I already deem him equal to Cowper, and superior to all living poets besides. What says Coleridge? The "Monody on Henderson" is *immensely good*, the rest of that little volume is *readable, and above mediocrity.* I proceed to a more pleasant task; pleasant because the poems are yours; pleasant because you impose the task on me; and pleasant, let me add, because it will confer a whimsical importance on me, to sit in judgment upon your rhymes. First, though, let me thank you again and again, in my own and my sister's name, for your invitations; nothing could give us more pleasure than to come, but (were there no other reasons) while my brother's leg is so bad it is out of the question. Poor fellow! he is very feverish and light-headed, but

Cruikshanks has pronounced the symptoms favourable, and gives us every hope that there will be no need of amputation: God send not! We are necessarily confined with him all the afternoon and evening till very late, so that I am stealing a minute to write to you.

Thank you for your frequent letters; you are the only correspondent, and, I might add, the only friend I have in the world. I go nowhere, and have no acquaintance. Slow of speech, and reserved of manners, no one seeks or cares for my society; and I am left alone. A—— calls only occasionally, as though it were a duty rather, and seldom stays ten minutes. Then judge how thankful I am for your letters! Do not, however, burthen yourself with the correspondence. I trouble you again so soon, only in obedience to your injunctions. Complaints apart, proceed we to our task. I am called away to tea; thence must wait upon my brother; so must delay till to-morrow. Farewell. *Wednesday.*

Thursday.—I will first notice what is new to me. Thirteenth page; "The thrilling tones that concentrate the soul" is a nervous line, and the six first lines of page 14 are very pretty; the twenty-

first effusion a perfect thing. That in the manner of Spenser is very sweet, particularly at the close: the thirty-fifth effusion is most exquisite; that line in particular, "And, tranquil, muse upon tranquillity." It is the very reflex pleasure that distinguishes the tranquillity of a thinking being from that of a shepherd, a modern one I would be understood to mean, a Damætas, one that keeps other people's sheep. Certainly, Coleridge, your letter from Shurton Bars has less merit than most things in your volume; personally it may chime in with your own feelings, and therefore you love it best. It has, however, great merit. In your fourth epistle that is an exquisite paragraph, and fancy-full, of "A stream there is which rolls in lazy flow," &c., &c. "Murmurs, sweet unisons 'mid jasmin bowers" is a sweet line, and so are the three next. The concluding simile is far-fetched—"tempest-honoured" is a quaintish phrase

Yours is a poetical family. I was much surprised and pleased to see the signature of Sara to that elegant composition, the fifth epistle. I dare not *criticise* the "Religious Musings;" I like not to *select* any part, where all is excellent. I can only admire, and thank you for it in the name of

a Christian, as well as a lover of good poetry; only let me ask, is not that thought and those words in Young, "stands in the sun,"—or is it only such as Young, in one of his *better moments*, might have writ?—

> "Believe thou, O my soul,
> Life is a vision shadowy of truth;
> And vice, and anguish, and the wormy grave,
> Shapes of a dream!"

I thank you for these lines in the name of a necessarian, and for what follows in next paragraph, in the name of a child of fancy. After all, you cannot, nor ever will, write anything with which I shall be so delighted as what I have heard yourself repeat. You came to town, and I saw you at a time when your heart was yet bleeding with recent wounds. Like yourself, I was sore galled with disappointed hope; you had

> ——"many an holy lay
> That, mourning, soothed the mourner on his way;"

I had ears of sympathy to drink them in, and they yet vibrate pleasant on the sense. When I read in your little volume, your nineteenth effusion, or the twenty-eighth or twenty-ninth, or what you call the "Sigh," I think I hear *you* again. I image to myself the little smoky room

at the Salutation and Cat, where we have sat together through the winter nights, beguiling the cares of life with Poesy. When you left London, I felt a dismal void in my heart. I found myself cut off, at one and the same time, from two most dear to me. "How blest with ye the path could I have trod of quiet life!" In your conversation you had blended so many pleasant fancies that they cheated me of my grief. But in your absence the tide of melancholy rushed in again and did its worst mischief by overwhelming my reason. I have recovered, but feel a stupor that makes me indifferent to the hopes and fears of this life. I sometimes wish to introduce a religious turn of mind, but habits are strong things, and my religious fervours are confined, alas! to some fleeting moments of occasional solitary devotion. A correspondence, opening with you, has roused me a little from my lethargy and made me conscious of existence. Indulge me in it: I will not be very troublesome! At some future time I will amuse you with an account, as full as my memory will permit, of the strange turns my phrensy took. I look back upon it at times with a gloomy kind of envy; for, while it lasted, I had many, many hours of pure

happiness. Dream not, Coleridge, of having tasted all the grandeur and wildness of fancy till you have gone mad! All now seems to me vapid, comparatively so. Excuse this selfish digression. Your "Monody" is so superlatively excellent, that I can only wish it perfect, which I can't help feeling it is not quite. Indulge me in a few conjectures; what I am going to propose would make it more compressed, and, I think, more energetic, though I am sensible at the expense of many beautiful lines. Let it begin "Is this the land of song-ennobled line?" and proceed to "Otway's famished form;" then, "The Chatterton," to "blaze of Seraphim;" then, "clad in Nature's rich array," to "orient day;" then, "but soon the scathing lightning" to "blighted land;" then, "sublime of thought," to "his bosom glows;" then,

> "But soon upon *his* poor unsheltered head
> Did Penury her sickly mildew shed;
> And soon are fled the charms of early grace,
> And joy's wild gleams that lightened o'er his face."

Then "youth of tumultuous soul" to "sigh" as before. The rest may all stand down to "gaze upon the waves below." What follows now may come next as detached verses, suggested by the

Monody, rather than a part of it. They are, indeed, in themselves very sweet.

> "And we, at sober eve, would round thee throng,
> Hanging enraptured on thy stately song!"

in particular, perhaps. If I am obscure, you may understand me by counting lines: I have proposed omitting twenty-four lines: I feel that thus compressed it would gain energy, but think it most likely you will not agree with me; for who shall go about to bring opinions to the bed of Procrustes, and introduce among the sons of men a monotony of identical feelings? I only propose with diffidence. Reject you, if you please, with as little remorse as you would the colour of a coat or the pattern of a buckle, where our fancies differed.

The "Pixies" is a perfect thing, and so are the "Lines on the Spring," page 28. The "Epitaph on an Infant," like a Jack-o'-lanthorn, has danced about (or like Dr. Forster's scholars) out of the Morning Chronicle into the Watchman, and thence back into your collection. It is very pretty, and you seem to think so, but, may be, overlooked its chief merit, that of filling up a whole page. I had once deemed Sonnets of unrivalled use that

way, but your Epitaphs, I find, are the more diffuse. "Edmund" still holds its place among your best verses. "Ah! fair delights" to "roses round," in your Poem called "Absence," recall (none more forcibly) to my mind the tones in which *you recited it.* I will not notice, in this tedious (to you) manner, verses which have been so long delightful to me, and which you already know my opinion of. Of this kind are Bowles, Priestly, and that most exquisite and most Bowles-like of all, the nineteenth effusion. It would have better ended with "agony of care:" the two last lines are obvious and unnecessary, and you need not now make fourteen lines of it; now it is re-christened from a Sonnet to an Effusion. Schiller might have written the twentieth effusion: 'tis worthy of him in any sense. I was glad to meet with those lines you sent me when my sister was so ill; I had lost the copy, and felt not a little proud at seeing my name in your verse. The complaint of Ninathoma (first stanza in particular) is the best, or only good imitation, of Ossian I ever saw—your "Restless Gale" excepted. "To an Infant" is most sweet; is not "foodful," though, very harsh? Would not "dulcet" fruit be less harsh, or 'some

other friendly bi-syllable? In "Edmund," "Frenzy! fierce-eyed child" is not so well as "frantic," though that is an epithet adding nothing to the meaning. Slander *couching* was better than "squatting." In the "Man of Ross" it was a better line thus:

"If 'neath this roof thy wine-cheered moments pass,"

than as it stands now. Time nor nothing can reconcile me to the concluding five lines of "Kosciusko:" call it anything you will but sublime. In my twelfth effusion I had rather have seen what I wrote myself, though they bear no comparison with your exquisite lines—

"On rose-leaf-beds amid your faery bowers," &c.

I love my sonnets because they are the reflected images of my own feelings at different times. To instance, in the thirteenth—

"How reason reeled," &c.,

are good lines, but must spoil the whole with me, who know it is only a fiction of yours, and that the "rude dashings" in fact did not "rock me to repose." I grant the same objection applies not to the former sonnet; but still I love my own feelings; they are dear to memory,

though they now and then wake a sigh or a tear. "Thinking on divers things foredone," I charge you, Coleridge, spare my ewe-lambs; and though a gentleman may borrow six lines in an epic poem (I should have no objection to borrow five hundred, and, without acknowledging), still, in a sonnet, a personal poem, I do not "ask my friend the aiding verse;" I would not wrong your feelings, by proposing any improvements in such personal poems as "Thou bleedest, my poor heart,"—'od so, —I am caught—I have already done it; but that simile I propose abridging, would not change the feeling or introduce any alien ones. Do you understand me? In the twenty-eighth, however, and in the "Sigh," and that composed at Clevedon, things that come from the heart direct, not by the medium of the fancy, I would not suggest an alteration. When my blank verse is finished, or any long fancy poem, "propono tibi alterandum, cut-up-andum, abridgandam," just what you will with it; but spare my ewe-lambs! That "To Mrs. Siddons," now, you were welcome to improve, if it had been worth; but I say unto you again, Coleridge, spare my ewe-lambs! I must confess, were they mine, I should omit, in *editione*

secundâ, effusions two and three, because satiric; and below the dignity of the poet of "Religious Musings," fifth, seventh, half of the eighth, that "Written in early youth," as far as "thousand eyes,"—though I part not unreluctantly with that lively line—

"Chaste joyance dancing in her bright-blue eyes,"

and one or two just thereabouts. But I would substitute for it that sweet poem called "Recollection," in the fifth number of the Watchman, better, I think, than the remainder of this poem, though not differing materially: as the poem now stands it looks altogether confused; and do not omit those lines upon the "Early Blossom," in your sixth number of the Watchman; and I would omit the tenth effusion, or what would do better, alter and improve the last four lines. In fact, I suppose, if they were mine, I should *not* omit 'em; but your verse is, for the most part, so exquisite, that I like not to see aught of meaner matter mixed with it. Forgive my petulance, and often, I fear, ill-founded criticisms, and forgive me that I have, by this time, made your eyes and head ache with my long letter; but I cannot

forego hastily the pleasure and pride of thus conversing with you. You did not tell me whether I was to include the "Conciones ad Populum" in my remarks on your poems. They are not unfrequently sublime, and I think you could not do better than to turn 'em into verse—if you have nothing else to do. A——, I am sorry to say, is a *confirmed* Atheist; S——, a cold-hearted, well-bred, conceited disciple of Godwin, does him no good.

How I sympathise with you on the dull duty of a reviewer, and heartily damn with you Ned E—— and the Prosodist. I shall, however, wait impatiently for the articles in the Critical Review, next month, because they are *yours*. Young E. (W. Evans, a branch of a family you were once so intimate with) is come into our office, and sends his love to you! Coleridge! I devoutly wish that Fortune, who has made sport with you so long, may play one freak more, throw you into London, or some spot near it, and there snug-ify you for life. It is a selfish, but natural wish for me, cast as I am "on life's wide plain, friendless." Are you acquainted with Bowles? I see, by his last Elegy, (written at Bath,) you are near neighbours.

Thursday.

I do not know that I entirely agree with you in your stricture upon my sonnet "To Innocence." To men whose hearts are not quite deadened by their commerce with the world, innocence (no longer familiar) becomes an awful idea. So I felt when I wrote it. Your other censures (qualified and sweetened, though, with praises somewhat extravagant) I perfectly coincide with; yet I choose to retain the word "lunar"—indulge a "lunatic" in his loyalty to his mistress the moon! I have just been reading a most pathetic copy of verses on Sophia Pringle, who was hanged and burnt for coining. One of the strokes of pathos (which are very many, all somewhat obscure,) is, "She lifted up her guilty forger to heaven." A note explains, by "forger," her right hand, with which she forged or coined the base metal. For pathos read bathos. You have put me out of conceit with my blank verses by your "Religious Musings." I think they will come to nothing. I do not like 'em enough to send them. I have just been reading a book, which I may be too partial to, as it was the delight of my childhood; but I will recommend it to you;—it is Izaak Walton's "Complete Angler." All the scientific part you

may omit in reading. The dialogue is very simple, full of pastoral beauties, and will charm you. Many pretty old verses are inserted. This letter, which would be a week's work reading only, I do not wish you to answer it in less than a month. I shall be richly content with a letter from you some day early in July; though, if you get any how *settled* before then, pray let me know it immediately; it would give me much satisfaction. Concerning the Unitarian chapel, the salary is the only scruple that the most rigid moralist would admit as valid. Concerning the tutorage, is not the salary low, and absence from your family unavoidable? London is the only fostering soil for genius. Nothing more occurs just now; so I will leave you, in mercy, one small white spot empty below, to repose your eyes upon, fatigued as they must be, with the wilderness of words they have by this time painfully travelled through. God love you, Coleridge, and prosper you through life; though mine will be loss if your lot is to be cast at Bristol, or at Nottingham, or anywhere but London. Our loves to Mrs. C——.

C. L.

Friday, 10th June, 1796.

Coleridge, settled in his melancholy cottage, invited Lamb to visit him. The hope—the expectation—the disappointment, are depicted in the following letter, written in the summer of the eventful year 1796.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

The first moment I can come, I will; but my hopes of coming yet a while, hang on a ticklish thread. The coach I come by is immaterial, as I shall so easily, by your direction, find ye out. My mother is grown so entirely helpless (not having any use of her limbs) that Mary is necessarily confined from ever sleeping out, she being her bedfellow. She thanks you though, and will accompany me in spirit. Most exquisite are the lines from Withers. Your own lines, introductory to your poem on "Self," run smoothly and pleasurably, and I exhort you to continue 'em. What shall I say to your "Dactyls?" They are what you would call good *per se*, but a parody on some of 'em is just now suggesting itself, and you shall have it rough and unlicked; I mark with figures the lines parodied:—

4.—Sorely your Dactyls do drag along limp-footed.
5.—Sad is the measure that hangs a clog round 'em so.
6.—Meagre and languid, proclaiming its wretchedness.
1.—Weary, unsatisfied, not a little sick of 'em.
11.—Cold is my tired heart, I have no charity.
2.—Painfully travelling thus over the rugged road.
7.—O begone, measure, half Latin, half English, then.
12.—Dismal your Dactyls are, God help ye, rhyming ones!

I possibly may not come this fortnight; therefore, all thou hast to do is not to look for me any particular day, only to write word immediately, if at any time you quit Bristol, lest I come and Taffy be not at home. I *hope* I can come in a day or two; but young S——, of my office, is suddenly taken ill in this very nick of time, and I must officiate for him till he can come to work again: had the knave gone sick, and died, and been buried at any other time, philosophy might have afforded one comfort, but just now I have no patience with him. Quarles I am as great a stranger to as I was to Withers. I wish you would try and do something to bring our elder bards into more general fame. I writhe with indignation when, in books of criticism, where commonplace quotation is heaped upon quotation, I find no mention of such men as Massinger, or

Beaumont and Fletcher, men with whom succeeding dramatic writers (Otway alone excepted)* can bear no manner of comparison. Stupid Knox hath noticed none of 'em among his extracts.

Thursday.—Mrs. C—— can scarcely guess how she has gratified me by her very kind letter and sweet little poem. I feel that I *should* thank her in rhyme, but she must take my acknowledgment, at present, in plain honest prose. The uncertainty in which I yet stand, whether I can come or no, damps my spirits, reduces me a degree below prosaical, and keeps me in a suspense that fluctuates between hope and fear. Hope is a charming, lively, blue-eyed wench, and I am always glad of

* An exception he certainly would not have made a few years afterwards; for he used to mention two pretty lines in the "Orphan,"

> "Sweet as the shepherd's pipe upon the mountains,
> With all his fleecy flock at feed beside him,"

as a redeeming passage amidst mere stage trickeries. The great merit which lies in the construction of "Venice Preserved," was not in his line of appreciation; and he thought Thompson's reference to Otway's ladies—

> ——— "poor Monimia moans,
> And Belvidera pours her soul in love,"

worth both heroines.

her company, but could dispense with the visitor she brings with her—her younger sister, Fear, a white-livered, lily-cheeked, bashful, palpitating, awkward hussy, that hangs, like a green girl, at her sister's apron-strings, and will go with her wherever *she* goes. For the life and soul of me, I could not improve those lines in your poem on the Prince and Princess, so I changed them to what you bid me, and left them at Perry's.* I think them altogether good, and do not see why you were solicitous about any alteration. I have not yet seen, but will make it my business to see, to-day's Chronicle, for your verses on Horne Tooke. Dyer stanza'd him in one of the papers of this day, but, I think, unsuccessfully. Tooke's friends meeting was, I suppose, a dinner of condolence.† I am not sorry to find you (for all Sara) immersed in clouds of smoke and metaphysics. You know I had a sneaking kindness for this last noble science, and you taught me some smattering of it. I look to become no mean proficient under your tuition.

* Some "occasional" verses of Coleridge's written to order for the Morning Chronicle.

† This was just after the Westminster Election, in which Mr. Tooke was defeated.

Coleridge, what do you mean by saying you wrote to me about Plutarch and Porphyry? I received no such letter, nor remember a syllable of the matter, yet am not apt to forget any part of your epistles, least of all, an injunction like that. I will cast about for 'em tho'. I am a sad hand to know what books are worth, and both these worthy gentlemen are alike out of my line. To-morrow I shall be less suspensive, and in better cue to write, so good bye at present.

Friday Evening.—That execrable aristocrat and knave R—— has given me an absolute refusal of leave. The *poor man* cannot guess at my disappointment. Is it not hard, "this dread dependance on the low-bred mind?" Continue to write to me tho', and I must be content. Our loves and best good wishes attend upon you both.

LAMB.

S—— did return, but there are two or three more ill and absent, which was the plea for refusing me. I shall never have heart to ask for holidays again. The man next him in office, C——, furnished him with the objections.

C. LAMB.

The little copy of verses in which Lamb commemorated and softened his disappointment, bearing date (a most unusual circumstance with Lamb), 5th July 1796, was inclosed in a letter of the following day, which refers to a scheme Coleridge had formed of settling in London on an invitation to share the Editorship of the Morning Chronicle. The poem includes a lamentation over a fantastical loss—that of a draught of the Avon "which Shakespeare drank;" somewhat strangely confounding the Avon of Stratford with that of Bristol. It may be doubted whether Shakespeare knew the taste of the waves of one Avon more than of the other, or whether Lamb would not have found more kindred with the world's poet in a glass of sack, than in the water of either stream. Coleridge must have enjoyed the misplaced sentiment of his friend, for he was singularly destitute of sympathy with local associations, which he regarded as interfering with the pure and simple impression of great deeds or thoughts; denied a special interest to the Pass of Thermopylæ; and instead of subscribing to purchase "Shakespeare's House," would scarcely have admitted the peculiar sanctity of the spot which enshrines his ashes.

TO SARA AND HER SAMUEL.

Was it so hard a thing?—I did but ask
A fleeting holiday. One little week,
Or haply two, had bounded my request.

What if the jaded steer, who all day long
Had borne the heat and labour of the plough,
When evening came, and her sweet cooling hour,
Should seek to trespass on a neighbour copse,
Where greener herbage waved, or clearer streams
Invited him to slake his burning thirst?
That man were crabbed, who should say him nay;
That man were churlish, who should drive him thence!

A blessing light upon your heads, ye good,
Ye hospitable pair! I may not come
To catch on Clifden's heights the summer gale;
I may not come a pilgrim to the vales
Of Avon, lucid stream, to taste the waves
Which Shakespeare drank, our British Helicon:
Or with mine eye intent on Redcliffe towers,
To muse in tears on that mysterious youth,
Cruelly slighted, who to London walls,
In evil hour, shaped his disastrous course.
With better hopes, I trust from Avon's vales,
Another "minstrel" cometh! Youth endear'd,
God and good angels guide thee on thy road,
And gentler fortunes wait the friends I love.

C. L.

The letter accompanying these verses begins cheerfully thus:

What can I do till you send word what priced

and placed house you should like? Islington, possibly, you would not like; to me 'tis classical ground. Knightsbridge is a desirable situation for the air of the parks; St. George's Fields is convenient for its contiguity to the Bench. Choose! But are you really coming to town? The hope of it has entirely disarmed my petty disappointment of its nettles, yet I rejoice so much on my own account, that I fear I do not feel enough pure satisfaction on yours. Why, surely, the joint editorship of the Chronicle must be very comfortable and secure living for a man. But should not you read French, or do you? and can you write with sufficient moderation, as 'tis called, when one suppresses the one half of what one feels or could say on a subject, to chime in the better with popular lukewarmness? White's "Letters" are near publication; could you review 'em or get 'em reviewed? Are you not connected with the Critical Review? His frontispiece is a good conceit—Sir John learning to dance to please Madam Page, a dress of doublet, &c., invests his upper half, and modern pantaloons with shoes, &c., of the eighteenth century, his lower half; and the whole work is full of goodly quips and rare

fancies, "all deftly masqued like hoar antiquity" —much superior to Dr. Kenrick's "Falstaff's Wedding," which you may have seen. A—— sometimes laughs at superstition, and religion, and the like. A living fell vacant lately in the gift of the Hospital: White informed him that he stood a fair chance for it. He scrupled and scrupled about it, and at last, to use his own words, "tampered" with Godwin to know whether the thing was honest or not. Godwin said nay to it, and A—— rejected the living! Could the blindest poor papist have bowed more servilely to his priest or casuist? Why sleep the Watchman's answers to that Godwin? I beg you will not delay to alter, if you mean to keep those last lines I sent you. Do that, and read these for your pains:—

TO THE POET COWPER.

Cowper, I thank my God that thou art heal'd!
Thine was the sorest malady of all;
And I am sad to think that it should light
Upon the worthy head! But thou art heal'd,
And thou art yet, we trust, the destined man,
Born to reanimate the lyre, whose chords
Have slumber'd, and have idle lain so long;
To the immortal sounding of whose strings
Did Milton frame the stately-paced verse;

Among whose verses with light finger playing,
Our elder bard, Spenser, a gentle name,
The lady Muses' dearest darling child,
Elicited the deftest tunes yet heard
In hall or bower, taking the delicate ear
Of Sidney and his peerless Maiden Queen.

Thou, then, take up the mighty epic strain,
Cowper, of England's Bards, the wisest and the best.

1796.

I have read your climax of praises in those three Reviews. These mighty spouters out of panegyric waters have, two of them, scattered their spray even upon me, and the waters are cooling and refreshing. Prosaically, the Monthly reviewers have made indeed a large article of it, and done you justice. The Critical have, in their wisdom, selected not the very best specimens, and notice not, except as one name on the muster-roll, the "Religious Musings." I suspect Master D—— to have been the writer of that article, as the substance of it was the very remarks and the very language he used to me one day. I fear you will not accord entirely with my sentiments of Cowper, as *expressed* above (perhaps scarcely just); but the poor gentleman has just recovered from his lunacies, and that begets pity, and pity love, and love admiration;

and then it goes hard with people but they lie! Have you read the Ballad called "Leonora," in the second number of the Monthly Magazine? If you have!!!! There is another fine song, from the same author (Bürger), in the third number, of scarce inferior merit; and (vastly below these) there are some happy specimens of English hexameters, in an imitation of Ossian, in the fifth number. For your Dactyls—I am sorry you are so sore about 'em—a very Sir Fretful! In good troth, the Dactyls are good Dactyls, but their measure is naught. Be not yourself "half anger, half agony," if I pronounce your darling lines not to be the best you ever wrote in all your life—you have written much.

Have a care, good Master Poet, of the Statute *de Contumeliâ*. What do you mean by calling Madame Maras,—harlots, and naughty things? * The goodness of the verse would not save you in a court of justice. But are you really coming to town, Coleridge? A gentleman called in London lately,

* ——— "I detest
These scented rooms, where, to a gaudy throng,
Heaves the proud harlot her distended breast
In intricacies of laborious song."
Lines composed in a Concert Room by S. T. C.

from Bristol, and inquired whether there were any of the family of a Mr. Chambers living: this Mr. Chambers, he said, had been the making of a friend's fortune, who wished to make some return for it. He went away without seeing her. Now, a Mrs. Reynolds, a very intimate friend of ours, whom you have seen at our house, is the only daughter, and all that survives, of Mr. Chambers; and a very little supply would be of service to her, for she married very unfortunately, and has parted with her husband. Pray find out this Mr. Pember (for that was the gentleman's name); he is an attorney, and lives at Bristol. Find him out, and acquaint him with the circumstances of the case, and offer to be the medium of supply to Mrs. Reynolds, if he chooses to make her a present. She is in very distressed circumstances. Mr. Pember, attorney, Bristol. Mr. Chambers lived in the Temple; Mrs. Reynolds, his daughter, was my schoolmistress, and is in the room at this present writing. This last circumstance induced me to write so soon again. I have not further to add. Our loves to Sara. *Thursday.*

C. LAMB.

CHAPTER II.

LETTERS OF LAMB TO COLERIDGE, CHIEFLY RELATING TO THE DEATH OF MRS. LAMB, AND MISS LAMB'S SUBSEQUENT CONDITION.

THE autumn of 1796 found Lamb engaged all the morning in task-work at the India House, and all the evening in attempting to amuse his father by playing cribbage; sometimes snatching a few minutes for his only pleasure, writing to Coleridge; while Miss Lamb was worn down to a state of extreme nervous misery, by attention to needlework by day, and to her mother by night, until the insanity, which had been manifested more than once, broke out into frenzy, which, on Thursday, 22nd of September, proved fatal to her mother. The following account of the proceedings on the inquest, copied from the Times of Monday, 26th September, 1796, supplies the details of this terrible calamity, doubtless with accuracy, except that it would seem, from Lamb's ensuing letter to

Coleridge, that *he*, and not the landlord, took the knife from the unconscious hand.

"On Friday afternoon, the coroner and a jury sat on the body of a lady in the neighbourhood of Holborn, who died in consequence of a wound from her daughter the preceding day. It appeared, by the evidence adduced, that, while the family were preparing for dinner, the young lady seized a case-knife lying on the table, and in a menacing manner pursued a little girl, her apprentice, round the room. On the calls of her infirm mother to forbear, she renounced her first object, and, with loud shrieks, approached her parent. The child, by her cries, quickly brought up the landlord of the house, but too late. The dreadful scene presented to him the mother lifeless, pierced to the heart, on a chair, her daughter yet wildly standing over her with the fatal knife, and the old man, her father, weeping by her side, himself bleeding at the forehead from the effects of a severe blow he received from one of the forks she had been madly hurling about the room.

"For a few days prior to this, the family had observed some symptoms of insanity in her, which had so much increased on the Wednesday evening,

that her brother, early the next morning, went to Dr. Pitcairn, but that gentleman was not at home.

"It seems the young lady had been once before deranged.

"The jury, of course, brought in their verdict—*Lunacy*."*

The following is Lamb's account of the event to Coleridge:—

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

White, or some of my friends, or the public papers, by this time may have informed you of the terrible calamities that have fallen on our family. I will only give you the outlines:—My

* A statement nearly similar to this will be found in several other journals of the day, and in the Annual Register for the year. The "True Briton" adds:—"It appears she had been before, in the earlier part of her life, deranged, from the harassing fatigues of too much business. As her carriage towards her mother had always been affectionate in the extreme, it is believed her increased attachment to her, as her infirmities called for it by day and by night, caused her loss of reason at this time. It has been stated in some of the morning papers that she has an insane brother in confinement; but this is without foundation." None of the accounts give the names of the sufferers; but in the index to the Annual Register, the anonymous account is referred to with Mrs. Lamb's name.

poor dear, dearest sister, in a fit of insanity, has been the death of her own mother. I was at hand only time enough to snatch the knife out of her grasp. She is at present in a madhouse, from whence I fear she must be moved to an hospital. God has preserved to me my senses,—I eat, and drink, and sleep, and have my judgment, I believe, very sound. My poor father was slightly wounded, and I am left to take care of him and my aunt. Mr. Norris, of the Blue-coat School, has been very very kind to us, and we have no other friend; but, thank God, I am very calm and composed, and able to do the best that remains to do. Write as religious a letter as possible, but no mention of what is gone and done with. With me "the former things are passed away," and I have something more to do than to feel.

God Almighty have us well in His keeping.

C. LAMB.

Mention nothing of poetry. I have destroyed every vestige of past vanities of that kind. Do as you please, but if you publish, publish mine (I give free leave) without name or initial, and never send me a book, I charge you.

Your own judgment will convince you not to take any notice of this yet to your dear wife. You look after your family,—I have my reason and strength left to take care of mine. I charge you, don't think of coming to see me—write. I will not see you if you come. God Almighty love you and all of us.

C. LAMB.

After the inquest, Miss Lamb was placed in an Asylum, where she was, in a short time, restored to reason. The following is Lamb's next letter.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

Your letter was an inestimable treasure to me. It will be a comfort to you, I know, to know that our prospects are somewhat brighter. My poor dear, dearest sister, the unhappy and unconscious instrument of the Almighty's judgments on our house, is restored to her senses; to a dreadful sense and recollection of what has past, awful to her mind and impressive (as it must be to the end of life), but tempered with religious resignation and the reasonings of a sound

judgment, which, in this early stage, knows how to distinguish between a deed committed in a transient fit of frenzy, and the terrible guilt of a mother's murder. I have seen her. I found her, this morning, calm and serene; far, very far from an indecent forgetful serenity; she has a most affectionate and tender concern for what has happened. Indeed, from the beginning, frightful and hopeless as her disorder seemed, I had confidence enough in her strength of mind, and religious principle, to look forward to a time when even *she* might recover tranquillity. God be praised, Coleridge, wonderful as it is to tell, I have never once been otherwise than collected and calm; even on the dreadful day, and in the midst of the terrible scene, I preserved a tranquillity which bystanders may have construed into indifference—a tranquillity not of despair. Is it folly or sin in me to say that it was a religious principle that *most* supported me? I allow much to other favourable circumstances. I felt that I had something else to do than to regret. On that first evening, my aunt was lying insensible, to all appearance like one dying,—my father, with his poor forehead plaistered over, from a wound he

had received from a daughter dearly loved by him, and who loved him no less dearly,—my mother a dead and murdered corpse in the next room—yet was I, wonderfully supported. I closed not my eyes in sleep that night, but lay without terrors and without despair. I have lost no sleep since. I had been long used not to rest in things of sense,—had endeavoured after a comprehension of mind, unsatisfied with the "ignorant present time," and *this* kept me up. I had the whole weight of the family thrown on me; for my brother, little disposed (I speak not without tenderness for him) at any time to take care of old age and infirmities, had now, with his bad leg, an exemption from such duties, and I was now left alone. One little incident may serve to make you understand my way of managing my mind. Within a day or two after the fatal one, we dressed for dinner a tongue which we had had salted for some weeks in the house. As I sat down, a feeling like remorse struck me;—this tongue poor Mary got for me, and I can partake of it now, when she is far away! A thought occurred and relieved me,—if I give into this way of feeling, there is not a chair, a room, an object in our rooms, that

will not awaken the keenest griefs; I must rise above such weaknesses. I hope this was not want of true feeling. I did not let this carry me, though, too far. On the very second day (I date from the day of horrors), as is usual in such cases, there were a matter of twenty people, I do think, supping in our room; they prevailed with me to eat *with them* (for to eat I never refused). They were all making merry in the room! Some had come from friendship, some from busy curiosity, and some from interest; I was going to partake with them; when my recollection came that my poor dead mother was lying in the next room—the very next room;—a mother who, through life, wished nothing but her children's welfare. Indignation, the rage of grief, something like remorse, rushed upon my mind. In an agony of emotion I found my way mechanically to the adjoining room, and fell on my knees by the side of her coffin, asking forgiveness of heaven, and sometimes of her, for forgetting her so soon. Tranquillity returned, and it was the only violent emotion that mastered me, and I think it did me good.

I mention these things because I hate concealment, and love to give a faithful journal of what

passes within me. Our friends have been very good. Sam Le Grice, who was then in town, was with me the three or four first days, and was a brother to me, gave up every hour of his time, to the very hurting of his health and spirits, in constant attendance and humouring my poor father; talked with him, read to him, played at cribbage with him (for so short is the old man's recollection, that he was playing at cards, as though nothing had happened, while the coroner's inquest was sitting over the way!) Samuel wept tenderly when he went away, for his mother wrote him a very severe letter on his loitering so long in town, and he was forced to go. Mr. Norris, of Christ's Hospital, has been as a father to me—Mrs. Norris as a mother; though we had few claims on them. A gentleman, brother to my godmother, from whom we never had right or reason to expect any such assistance, sent my father twenty pounds; and to crown all these God's blessings to our family at such a time, an old lady, a cousin of my father and aunt's, a gentlewoman of fortune, is to take my aunt and make her comfortable for the short remainder of her days. My aunt is recovered, and as well as ever, and highly pleased at thoughts of going—and has

generously given up the interest of her little money (which was formerly paid my father for her board) wholely and solely to my sister's use. Reckoning this, we have, Daddy and I, for our two selves and an old maid-servant to look after him, when I am out, which will be necessary, 170*l.* or 180*l.* rather a-year, out of which we can spare 50*l.* or 60*l.* at least for Mary while she stays at Islington, where she must and shall stay during her father's life, for his and her comfort. I know John will make speeches about it, but she shall not go into an hospital. The good lady of the madhouse, and her daughter, an elegant, sweet-behaved young lady, love her, and are taken with her amazingly; and I knew from her own mouth she loves them, and longs to be with them as much. Poor thing, they say she was but the other morning saying, she knew she must go to Bethlem for life; that one of her brothers would have it so, but the other would wish it not, but be obliged to go with the stream; that she had often as she passed Bethlem thought it likely, "here it may be my fate to end my days," conscious of a certain flightiness in her poor head oftentimes, and mindful of more than one severe illness of that nature before. A legacy

of 100*l.*, which my father will have at Christmas, and this 20*l.* I mentioned before, with what is in the house, will much more than set us clear. If my father, an old servant-maid, and I, can't live, and live comfortably, on 130*l.* or 120*l.* a-year, we ought to burn by slow fires; and I almost would, that Mary might not go into an hospital. Let me not leave an unfavourable impression on your mind respecting my brother. Since this has happened, he has been very kind and brotherly; but I fear for his mind,—he has taken his ease in the world, and is not fit himself to struggle with difficulties, nor has much accustomed himself to throw himself into their way; and I know his language is already, "Charles, you must take care of yourself, you must not abridge yourself of a single pleasure you have been used to," &c., &c., in that style of talking. But you, a necessarian, can respect a difference of mind, and love what *is amiable* in a character not perfect. He has been very good,—but I fear for his mind. Thank God, I can unconnect myself with him, and shall manage all my father's monies in future myself, if I take charge of Daddy, which poor John has not even hinted a wish, at any future time even, to share with me.

The lady at this madhouse assures me that I may dismiss immediately both doctor and apothecary, retaining occasionally a composing draught or so for a while; and there is a less expensive establishment in her house, where she will only not have a room and nurse to herself, for 50*l.* or guineas a-year—the outside would be 60*l.*—you know, by economy, how much more even I shall be able to spare for her comforts. She will, I fancy, if she stays, make one of the family, rather than of the patients; and the old and young ladies I like exceedingly, and she loves dearly; and they, as the saying is, take to her very extraordinarily, if it is extraordinary that people who see my sister should love her. Of all the people I ever saw in the world, my poor sister was most and thoroughly devoid of the least tincture of selfishness. I will enlarge upon her qualities, poor dear, dearest soul, in a future letter, for my own comfort, for I understand her thoroughly; and, if I mistake not, in the most trying situation that a human being can be found in, she will be found (I speak not with sufficient humility, I fear, but humanly and foolishly speaking), she will be found, I trust, uniformly great and amiable. God keep her in her present

mind, to whom be thanks and praise for all His dispensations to mankind!

C. LAMB.

These mentioned good fortunes and change of prospects had almost brought my mind over to the extreme, the very opposite to despair. I was in danger of making myself too happy. Your letter brought me back to a view of things which I had entertained from the beginning. I hope (for Mary I can answer)—but I hope that *I* shall through life never have less recollection, nor a fainter impression, of what has happened than I have now. It is not a light thing, nor meant by the Almighty to be received lightly. I must be serious, circumspect, and deeply religious through life; and by such means may *both* of us escape madness in future, if it so please the Almighty!

Send me word how it fares with Sam. I repeat it, your letter was, and will be, an inestimable treasure to me. You have a view of what my situation demands of me, like my own view, and I trust a just one.

Coleridge, continue to write; but do not for

ever offend me by talking of sending me cash. Sincerely, and on my soul, we do not want it. God love you both.

I will write again very soon. Do you write directly.

As Lamb recovered from the shock of his own calamity, he found comfort in gently admonishing his friend on that imbecility of purpose which attended the development of his mighty genius. His next letter, commencing with this office of friendship, soon reverts to the condition of that sufferer, who was endeared to him the more because others shrank from and forsook her.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

I grieve from my very soul to observe you in your plans of life, veering about from this hope to the other, and settling nowhere. Is it an untoward fatality, (speaking humanly) that does this for you—a stubborn, irresistible concurrence of events—or lies the fault, as I fear it does, in your own mind? You seem to be taking up

splendid schemes of fortune only to lay them down again; and your fortunes are an *ignis fatuus* that has been conducting you, in thought, from Lancaster-court, Strand, to somewhere near Matlock; then jumping across to Dr. Somebody's, whose son's tutor you were likely to be; and, would to God, the dancing demon *may* conduct you at last, in peace and comfort, to the "life and labours of a cottager." You see, from the above awkward playfulness of fancy, that my spirits are not quite depressed. I should ill deserve God's blessings, which, since the late terrible event, have come down in mercy upon us, if I indulged regret or querulousness. Mary continues serene and cheerful. I have not by me a little letter she wrote to me; for, though I see her almost every day, yet we delight to write to one another, for we can scarce see each other but in company with some of the people of the house. I have not the letter by me, but will quote from memory what she wrote in it: "I have no bad terrifying dreams. At midnight, when I happen to awake, the nurse sleeping by the side of me, with the noise of the poor mad people around me, I have no fear. The spirit of my mother seems to descend and smile

upon me, and bid me live to enjoy the life and reason which the Almighty has given me. I shall see her again in heaven; she will then understand me better. My grandmother, too, will understand me better, and will then say no more, as she used to do, 'Polly, what are those poor crazy moythered brains of yours thinking of always?'" Poor Mary! my mother indeed *never understood* her right. She loved her, as she loved us all, with a mother's love; but in opinion, in feeling, and sentiment, and disposition, bore so distant a resemblance to her daughter, that she never understood her right; never could believe how much *she* loved her; but met her caresses, her protestations of filial affection, too frequently with coldness and repulse. Still she was a good mother. God forbid I should think of her but *most* respectfully, *most* affectionately. Yet she would always love my brother above Mary, who was not worthy of one-tenth of that affection which Mary had a right to claim. But it is my sister's gratifying recollection, that every act of duty and of love she could pay, every kindness, (and I speak true, when I say to the hurting of her health, and most probably in great part to the derangement

of her senses,) through a long course of infirmities and sickness, she could show her, she ever did. I will, some day, as I promised, enlarge to you upon my sister's excellences; it will seem like exaggeration, but I will do it. At present, short letters suit my state of mind best. So take my kindest wishes for your comfort and establishment in life, and for Sara's welfare and comfort with you. God love you. God love us all.

C. LAMB.

Two months, though passed by Lamb in anxiety and labour, but cheered by Miss Lamb's continued possession of reason, so far restored the tone of his mind, that his interest in the volume which had been contemplated to introduce his first verses to the world, in association with those of his friend, was enkindled anew. While cherishing the hope of reunion with his sister, and painfully wresting his leisure hours from poetry and Coleridge to amuse the dotage of his father, he watched over his own returning sense of enjoyment with a sort of holy jealousy, apprehensive lest he should forget too soon the terrible visitation of Heaven. At this time he thus writes:—

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

I have delayed writing thus long, not having by me my copy of your poems, which I had lent. I am not satisfied with all your intended omissions. Why omit 40, 63, 84? above all, let me protest strongly against your rejecting the "Complaint of Ninathoma," 86. The words, I acknowledge, are Ossian's, but you have added to them the "music of Caril." If a vicarious substitute be wanting, sacrifice (and 'twill be a piece of self-denial *too*), the "Epitaph on an Infant," of which its author seems so proud, so tenacious. Or, if your heart be set on *perpetuating* the four-line wonder, I'll tell you what do; sell the copyright of it at once to a country statuary; commence in this manner Death's prime poet-laureate; and let your verses be adopted in every village round, instead of those hitherto famous ones:—

"Afflictions sore long time I bore,
Physicians were in vain." *

* This epitaph, which, notwithstanding Lamb's gentle banter, occupied an entire page in the book, is curious—"a miracle instead of wit"—for it is a *common-place* of Coleridge, who, investing ordinary things with a dreamy splendour, or weighing them down with a cumulated thought, has rarely if ever written

I have seen your last very beautiful poem in the Monthly Magazine: write thus, and you most generally have written thus, and I shall never quarrel with you about simplicity. With regard to my lines—

"Laugh all that weep," &c.

I would willingly sacrifice them; but my portion of the volume is so ridiculously little, that, in honest truth, I can't spare them: as things are, I have very slight pretensions to participate in the title-page. White's book is at length reviewed in the Monthly; was it your doing, or Dyer's, to whom I sent him—or, rather, do you not write in the Critical?—for I observed, in an article of this month's, a line quoted out of that sonnet on Mrs. Siddons,

"With eager wondering, and perturb'd delight."

And a line from *that* sonnet would not readily have

a stanza so smoothly rapid—so devoid of merit or offence—(unless it be an offence to make *fade* do duty as a verb active) as the following:—

"Ere sin could blight or sorrow *fade*,
Death came with friendly care;
The opening bud to Heaven convey'd,
And bade it blossom there."

occurred to a stranger. That sonnet, Coleridge, brings afresh to my mind the time when you wrote those on Bowles, Priestly, Burke;—'twas two Christmases ago, and in that nice little smoky room at the Salutation, which is ever now continually presenting itself to my recollection, with all its associate train of pipes, tobacco, egg-hot, welsh-rabbits, metaphysics, and poetry.—Are we *never* to meet again? How differently I am circumstanced now! I have never met with any one—never shall meet with any one—who could or can compensate me for the loss of your society. I have no one to talk all these matters about to; I lack friends, I lack books to supply their absence: but these complaints ill become me. Let me compare my present situation, prospects, and state of mind, with what they were but two months back—but two months! O my friend, I am in danger of forgetting the awful lessons then presented to me! Remind me of them; remind me of my duty! Talk seriously with me when you do write! I thank you, from my heart I thank you, for your solicitude about my sister. She is quite well, but must not, I fear, come to live with us yet a good while. In the first place, because, at present, it would hurt her, and hurt

my father, for them to be together: secondly, from a regard to the world's good report, for, I fear, tongues will be busy *whenever* that event takes place. Some have hinted, one man has pressed it on me, that she should be in perpetual confinement: what she has done to deserve, or where is the necessity of such an hardship, I see not; do you? I am starving at the India House,—near seven o'clock without my dinner, and so it has been, and will be, almost all the week. I get home at night o'erwearied, quite faint, and then to cards with my father, who will not let me enjoy a meal in peace; but I must conform to my situation, and I hope I am, for the most part, not unthankful.

I am got home at last, and, after repeated games at cribbage, have got my father's leave to write awhile; with difficulty got it, for when I expostulated about playing any more, he aptly replied, "If you won't play with me, you might as well not come home at all." The argument was unanswerable, and I set to afresh. I told you I do not approve of your omissions, neither do I quite coincide with you in your arrangements. I have not time to point out a better, and I suppose some self-associations of your own have determined their

place as they now stand. Your beginning, indeed, with the "Joan of Arc" lines I coincide entirely with. I love a splendid outset—a magnificent portico,—and the diapason is grand. When I read the "Religious Musings," I think how poor, how unelevated, unoriginal, my blank verse is —"Laugh all that weep," especially, where the subject demanded a grandeur of conception; and I ask what business they have among yours? but friendship covereth a multitude of defects. I want some loppings made in the "Chatterton;" it wants but a little to make it rank among the finest irregular lyrics I ever read. Have you time and inclination to go to work upon it—or is it too late—or do you think it needs none? Don't reject those verses in one of your Watchmen, "Dear native brook," &c.; nor I think those last lines you sent me, in which "all effortless" is without doubt to be preferred to "inactive." If I am writing more than ordinarily dully, 'tis that I am stupified with a tooth-ache. Hang it! do not omit 48, 52, and 53: what you do retain, though, call sonnets, for heaven's sake, and not effusions. Spite of your ingenious anticipations of ridicule in your preface, the five last lines of 50 are too

good to be lost, the rest is not much worth. My tooth becomes importunate—I must finish. Pray, pray, write to me: if you knew with what an anxiety of joy I open such a long packet as you last sent me, you would not grudge giving a few minutes now and then to this intercourse (the only intercourse I fear we two shall ever have)—this conversation with your friend—such I boast to be called. God love you and yours! Write me when you move, lest I direct wrong. Has Sara no poems to publish? Those lines, 129, are probably too light for the volume where the "Religious Musings" are, but I remember some very beautiful lines, addressed by somebody at Bristol to somebody in London. God bless you once more. *Thursday-night.*

C. Lamb.

In another letter, about this time (December, 1796), Lamb transmitted to Coleridge two Poems for the volume—one a copy of verses "To a Young Lady going out to India," which were not inserted, and are not worthy of preservation; the other, entitled, "The Tomb of Douglas," which was inserted, and which he [illegible] valued as a memorial

of his impression of Mrs. Siddons' acting in Lady Randolph. The following passage closes the sheet.

At length I have done with verse-making; not that I relish other people's poetry less; theirs comes from 'em without effort, mine is the difficult operation of a brain scanty of ideas, made more difficult by disuse. I have been reading "The Task" with fresh delight. I am glad you love Cowper: I could forgive a man for not enjoying Milton, but I would not call that man my friend who should be offended with the "divine chit-chat of Cowper." Write to me. God love you and yours. C. L.

An addition to Lamb's household-cares is thus mentioned in a letter to Mr. Coleridge.

In truth, Coleridge, I am perplexed, and at times almost cast down. I am beset with perplexities. The old hag of a wealthy relation, who took my aunt off our hands in the beginning of trouble, has found out that she is "indolent and mulish," I quote her own words, and that her attachment to us is so strong that she can never be happy apart. The lady, with delicate irony,

remarks, that if I am not an hypocrite, I shall rejoice to receive her again; and that it will be a means of making me more fond of home to have so dear a friend to come home to! The fact is, she is jealous of my aunt's bestowing any kind recollections on us, while she enjoys the patronage of her roof. She says she finds it inconsistent with her own "ease and tranquillity," to keep her any longer; and, in fine, summons me to fetch her home. Now, much as I should rejoice to transplant the poor old creature from the chilling air of such patronage, yet I know how straitened we are already, how unable already to answer any demand which sickness or any extraordinary expense may create. I know this, and all unused as I am to struggle with perplexities, I am somewhat nonplussed, to say no worse. This prevents me from a thorough relish of what Lloyd's kindness and your's have furnished me with. I thank you though from my heart, and feel myself not quite alone in the earth.

The following long letter, bearing date on the outside, 7th January, 1797, is addressed to Mr. Coleridge at Stowey, near Bridgewater, whither

he had removed from Bristol, to enjoy the society and protection of his friend Mr. Poole. The original is a curious specimen of clear compressed penmanship; being contained in three sides of a sheet of foolscap.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

Sunday morning.—You cannot surely mean to degrade the Joan of Arc into a pot-girl. You are not going, I hope, to annex to that most splendid ornament of Southey's poem all his cock-and-a-bull story of Joan, the publican's daughter of Neufchatel, with the lamentable episode of a waggoner, his wife, and six children. The texture will be most lamentably disproportionate. The first forty or fifty lines of these addenda are, no doubt, in their way, admirable, too; but many would prefer the Joan of Southey.

"On mightiest deeds to brood
Of shadowy vastness, such as made my heart
Throb fast; anon I paused, and in a state
Of half expectance listened to the wind;"

"They wondered at me, who had known me once
A cheerful careless damsel;"

"The eye,
That of the circling throng and visible world
Unseeing, saw the shapes of holy phantasy;"

I see nothing in your description of the maid equal to those. There is a fine originality certainly in those lines—

"For she had lived in this bad world
As in a place of tombs,
And touched not the pollutions of the dead;"

but your "fierce vivacity" is a faint copy of the "fierce and terrible benevolence" of Southey; added to this, that it would look like rivalship in you, and extort a comparison with Southey,—I think to your disadvantage. And the lines, considered in themselves as an addition to what you had before written, (strains of a far higher mood,) are but such as Madame Fancy loves in some of her more familiar moods, at such times as she has met Noll Goldsmith, and walked and talked with him, calling him "old acquaintance." Southey certainly has no pretensions to vie with you in the sublime of poetry; but he tells a plain tale better than you. I will enumerate some woeful blemishes, some of them sad deviations from that simplicity which was your aim. "Hailed who might be

near" (the "canvas-coverture moving," by the bye, is laughable); "a woman and six children" (by the way,—why not nine children? It would have been just half as pathetic again): "statues of sleep they seemed": "frost-mangled wretch": "green putridity": "hailed him immortal" (rather ludicrous again): "voiced a sad and simple tale" (abominable!): "improvendered": "such his tale": "Ah! suffering to the height of what was suffered" (a most *insufferable line*): "amazement of affright": "the hot sore brain attributes its own hues of ghastliness and torture" (what shocking confusion of ideas)!

In these delineations of common and natural feelings, in the familiar walks of poetry, you seem to resemble Montauban dancing with Roubigné's tenants, "*much of his native loftiness remained in the execution.*"

I was reading your "Religious Musings" the other day, and sincerely think it the noblest poem in the language, next after the "Paradise Lost," and even that was not made the vehicle of such grand truths. "There is one mind," &c., down to "Almighty's throne," are without a rival in the whole compass of my poetical reading.

"Stands in the sun, and with no partial gaze,
Views all creation."

I wish I could have written those lines. I rejoice that I am able to relish them. The loftier walks of Pindus are your proper region. There you have no compeer in modern times. Leave the lowlands, unenvied, in possession of such men as Cowper and Southey. Thus am I pouring balsam into the wounds I may have been inflicting on my poor friend's vanity.

In your notice of Southey's new volume, you omit to mention the most pleasing of all, the "Miniature"—

"There were those
Who formed high hopes and flattering ones of thee,
Young Robert!"

"Spirit of Spenser!—was the wanderer wrong?"

Fairfax I have been in quest of a long time. Johnson, in his "Life of Waller," gives a most delicious specimen of him, and adds, in the true manner of that delicate critic, as well as amiable man, "It may be pronounced that this old version will not be much read after the elegant translation of my friend, Mr. Hoole." I endeavoured —I wished to gain some idea of Tasso from

this Mr. Hoole, the great boast and ornament of the India House, but soon desisted. I found him more vapid than smallest small beer "sun-vinegared." Your "Dream," down to that exquisite line—

"I can't tell half his adventures,"

is a most happy resemblance of Chaucer. The remainder is so so. The best line, I think, is, "He belongeth, I believe, to the witch Melancholy." By the way, when will our volume come out? Don't delay it till you have written a new Joan of Arc. Send what you please by me, and in any way you choose, single or double. The India Company is better adapted to answer the cost than the generality of my friend's correspondents—such poor and honest dogs as John Thelwall, particularly. I cannot say I know Colson, at least intimately; I once supped with him and Allen; I think his manners very pleasing. I will not tell you what I think of Lloyd, for he may by chance come to see this letter, and that thought puts a restraint on me. I cannot think what subject would suit your epic genius; some philosophical subject, I conjecture, in which shall be blended the sublime

of poetry and of science. Your proposed "Hymns" will be a fit preparatory study wherewith "to discipline your young noviciate soul." I grow dull; I'll go walk myself out of my dulness.

Sunday night.—You and Sara are very good to think so kindly and so favourably of poor Mary; I would to God all did so too. But I very much fear she must not think of coming home in my father's lifetime. It is very hard upon her; but our circumstances are peculiar, and we must submit to them. God be praised she is so well as she is. She bears her situation as one who has no right to complain. My poor old aunt, whom you have seen, the kindest, goodest creature to me when I was at school; who used to toddle there to bring me good things, when I, school-boy like, only despised her for it, and used to be ashamed to see her come and sit herself down on the old coal-hole steps as you went into the old grammar-school, and open her apron, and bring out her bason, with some nice thing she had caused to be saved for me; the good old creature is now lying on her death-bed. I cannot bear to think on her deplorable state. To the shock she received on that our evil day, from which she never completely

recovered, I impute her illness. She says, poor thing, she is glad she is come home to die with me. I was always her favourite:

> "No after friendship e'er can raise
> The endearments of our early days;
> Nor e'er the heart such fondness prove,
> As when it first began to love."

Lloyd has kindly left me, for a keep-sake, "John Woolman." You have read it, he says, and like it. Will you excuse one short extract? I think it could not have escaped you. "Small treasure "to a resigned mind is sufficient. How happy is "it to be content with a little, to live in humility, "and feel that in us which breathes out this "language—Abba, Father!" —— I am almost ashamed to patch up a letter in this miscellaneous sort—but I please myself in the thought, that anything from me will be acceptable to you. I am rather impatient, childishly so, to see our names affixed to the same common volume. Send me two when it does come out; two will be enough—or indeed one—but two better. I have a dim recollection that, when in town, you were talking of the Origin of Evil as a most prolific subject for a long poem;—why not adopt it, Coleridge?—there

would be room for imagination. Or the description (from a Vision or Dream, suppose) of a Utopia in one of the planets (the moon for instance). Or a Five Days' Dream, which shall illustrate, in sensible imagery, Hartley's five Motives to Conduct: — 1. Sensation; 2. Imagination; 3. Ambition; 4. Sympathy; 5. Theopathy: — *First.* Banquets, music, &c., effeminacy,—and their insufficiency. *Second.* "Beds of hyacinths and roses, where young Adonis oft reposes;" "Fortunate Isles;" "The pagan Elysium," &c.; poetical pictures; antiquity as pleasing to the fancy;—their emptiness; madness, &c. *Third.* Warriors, Poets; some famous, yet more forgotten; their fame or oblivion now alike indifferent; pride, vanity, &c. *Fourth.* All manner of pitiable stories, in Spenser-like verse; love; friendship, relationship, &c. *Fifth.* Hermits; Christ and his apostles; martyrs; heaven, &c. And an imagination like yours, from these scanty hints, may expand into a thousand great ideas, if indeed you at all comprehend my scheme, which I scarce do myself.

Monday morn.—"A London letter—Nine-pence half-penny!" Look you, master poet, I have remorse as well as another man, and my bowels

can sound upon occasion. But I must put you to this charge, for I cannot keep back my protest, however ineffectual, against the annexing your latter lines to those former—this putting of new wine into old bottles. This my duty done, I will cease from writing till you invent some more reasonable mode of conveyance. Well may the "ragged followers of the Nine!" set up for flocci-nauci-what-do-you-call-'em-ists! and I do not wonder that in their splendid visions of Utopias in America, they protest against the admission of those *yellow*-complexioned, *copper*-coloured, *white*-livered gentlemen, who never prove themselves their friends! Don't you think your verses on a "Young Ass" too trivial a companion for the "Religious Musings?" — "scoundrel monarchs," alter that; and the "Man of Ross" is scarce admirable, as it now stands, curtailed of its fairer half: reclaim its property from the "Chatterton," which it does but encumber, and it will be a rich little poem. I hope you expunge great part of the old notes in the new edition: that, in particular, most barefaced, unfounded, impudent assertion, that Rogers is indebted for his story to Locke and a poem by Bruce! I have

read the latter. I scarce think you have. Scarce anything is common to them both. The author of the "Pleasures of Memory" was sorely hurt, Dyer says, by the accusation of unoriginality; he never saw the poem. I long to read your poem on Burns—I retain so indistinct a memory of it. In what shape and how does it come into public? Do you leave off writing poetry till you finish your Hymns? I suppose you print, now, all you have got by you. You have scarce enough unprinted to make a second volume with Lloyd? What is become of Cowper? Lloyd told me of some verses on his mother. If you have them by you, pray send 'em me. I do so love him! Never mind their merit. May be *I* may like 'em, as your taste and mine do not always exactly *identify*. Yours,

C. Lamb.

Soon after the date of this letter, death released the father from his state of imbecility and the son from his wearisome duties. With his life, the annuity he had derived from the old bencher he had served so faithfully, ceased; while the aunt continued to linger still with Lamb in his cheerless lodging. His sister still remained in confinement in the asylum

to which she had been consigned on her mother's death — perfectly sensible and calm,—and he was passionately desirous of obtaining her liberty. The surviving members of the family, especially his brother John, who enjoyed a fair income in the South Sea House, opposed her discharge;—and painful doubts were suggested by the authorities of the parish, where the terrible occurrence happened, whether they were not bound to institute proceedings, which must have placed her for life at the disposition of the Crown, especially as no medical assurance could be given against the probable recurrence of dangerous frenzy. But Charles came to her deliverance; he satisfied all the parties who had power to oppose her release, by his solemn engagement that he would take her under his care for life; and he kept his word. Whether any communication with the Home Secretary occurred before her release, I have been unable to ascertain; it was the impression of Mr. Lloyd, from whom my own knowledge of the circumstances, which the letters do not ascertain, was derived, that a communication took place, on which a similar pledge was given; at all events, the result was, that she left the asylum and took up her abode for

life with her brother Charles. For her sake, at the same time, he abandoned all thoughts of love and marriage; and with an income of scarcely more than 100*l*. a-year, derived from his clerkship, aided for a little while by the old aunt's small annuity, set out on the journey of life at twenty-two years of age, cheerfully, with his beloved companion, endeared to him the more by her strange calamity, and the constant apprehension of a recurrence of the malady which had caused it!

The illness of the poor old aunt brought on the confirmation of Lamb's fears respecting his sister's malady. After lingering a short time, she died; but before this, Miss Lamb's incessant attendance upon her produced a recurrence of insanity; Lamb was obliged to place her under medical care; and, left alone, wrote the following short and miserable letter:

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

MY DEAR COLERIDGE,

I don't know why I write, except from the propensity misery has to tell her griefs. Hetty died on Friday night, about eleven o'clock,

after her long illness; Mary, in consequence of fatigue and anxiety, is fallen ill again, and I was obliged to remove her yesterday. I am left alone in a house with nothing but Hetty's dead body to keep me company. To-morrow I bury her, and then I shall be quite alone, with nothing but a cat, to remind me that the house has been full of living beings like myself. My heart is quite sunk, and I don't know where to look for relief. Mary will get better again, but her constantly being liable to such relapses is dreadful; nor is it the least of our evils that her case and all our story is so well known around us. We are in a manner *marked.* Excuse my troubling you, but I have nobody by me to speak to me. I slept out last night, not being able to endure the change and the stillness. But I did not sleep well, and I must come back to my own bed. I am going to try and get a friend to come and be with me to-morrow. I am completely shipwrecked. My head is quite bad. I almost wish that Mary were dead.—God bless you. Love to Sara and Hartley.

C. LAMB.

CHAPTER III.

LETTERS TO COLERIDGE AND MANNING IN LAMB'S FIRST YEARS OF LIFE WITH HIS SISTER.—1797 TO 1800.

THE anxieties of Lamb's new position were assuaged during the spring of 1797, by frequent communications with Coleridge respecting the anticipated volume, and by some additions to his own share in its pages. He was also cheered by the company of Lloyd, who, having resided for a few months with Coleridge, at Stowey, came to London in some perplexity as to his future course. Of this visit Lamb speaks in the following letter, probably written in March. It contains some verses expressive of his delight at Lloyd's visit, which, although afterwards inserted in the volume, are so well fitted to their frame-work of prose, and so indicative of the feelings of the writer at this crisis of his life, that I may be excused for presenting them with the context.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

DEAR COL,

You have learned by this time, with surprise, no doubt, that Lloyd is with me in town. The emotions I felt on his coming so unlooked for, are not ill expressed in what follows, and what, if you do not object to them as too personal, and to the world obscure, or otherwise wanting in worth, I should wish to make a part of our little volume. I shall be sorry if that volume comes out, as it necessarily must do, unless you print those very schoolboy-ish verses I sent you on not getting leave to come down to Bristol last summer. I say I shall be sorry that I have addressed you in nothing which can appear in our joint volume; so frequently, so habitually, as you dwell in my thoughts, 'tis some wonder those thoughts came never yet in contact with a poetical mood. But you dwell in my heart of hearts; I love you in all the naked honesty of prose. God bless you, and all your little domestic circle—my tenderest remembrances to your beloved Sara, and a smile and a kiss from me to our dear dear little Hartley. The verses I refer to above, slightly amended, I have sent (forgetting

to ask your leave, tho' indeed I gave them only your initials), to the Monthly Magazine, where they may possibly appear next month, and where I hope to recognise your poem on Burns.

TO CHARLES LLOYD, AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR.

Alone, obscure, without a friend
A cheerless, solitary thing,
Why seeks my Lloyd the stranger out?
What offering can the stranger bring,

Of social scenes, home-bred delights,
That him in aught compensate may
For Stowey's pleasant winter nights,
For loves and friendships far away,

In brief oblivion to forego
Friends, such as thine, so justly dear,
And be awhile with me content
To stay, a kindly loiterer, here?

For this a gleam of random joy
Hath flush'd my unaccustom'd cheek;
And, with an o'er-charged bursting heart,
I feel the thanks, I cannot speak.

O! sweet are all the Muse's lays,
And sweet the charm of matin bird—
'Twas long since these estranged ears
The sweeter voice of friend had heard.

The voice hath spoke: the pleasant sounds,
In memory's ear, in after time
Shall live, to sometimes rouse a tear,
And sometimes prompt an honest rhyme.

For when the transient charm is fled,
And when the little week is o'er,
To cheerless, friendless solitude
When I return, as heretofore—

Long, long, within my aching heart
The grateful sense shall cherish'd be;
I 'll think less meanly of myself,
That Lloyd will sometimes think on me.

O Coleridge, would to God you were in London with us, or we two at Stowey with you all. Lloyd takes up his abode at the Bull and Mouth Inn; the Cat and Salutation would have had a charm more forcible for me. *O noctes cœnæque Deûm!* Anglice—Welch rabbits, punch, and poesy. Should you be induced to publish those very schoolboy-ish verses, print them as they will occur, if at all, in the Monthly Magazine; yet I should feel ashamed that to you I wrote nothing better: but they are too personal, and almost trifling and obscure withal. Some lines of mine to Cowper were in last Monthly Magazine; they have

not body of thought enough to plead for the retaining of them. My sister's kind love to you all.

C. LAMB.

The next letter to Coleridge, apparently the following April, begins with a transcript of Lamb's Poem, entitled "A Vision of Repentance," which was inserted in the *Addenda* to the volume, and is preserved among his collected poems, and thus proceeds:

The above you will please to print immediately before the blank verse fragments. Tell me if you like it. I fear the latter half is unequal to the former, in parts of which I think you will discover a delicacy of pencilling not quite un-Spenser-like. The latter half aims at the *measure*, but has failed to attain the *poetry* of Milton in his "Comus," and of Fletcher in that exquisite thing ycleped the "Faithful Shepherdess," where they both use eight-syllable lines. But this latter half was finished in great haste, and as a task, not from that impulse which affects the name of inspiration.

By the way, I have lit upon Fairfax's "Godfrey of Bullen," for half-a-crown. Rejoice with me.

Poor dear Lloyd! I had a letter from him yesterday; his state of mind is truly alarming. He has, by his own confession, kept a letter of mine unopened three weeks, afraid, he says, to open it, lest I should speak upbraidingly to him; and yet this very letter of mine was in answer to one, wherein he informed me that an alarming illness had alone prevented him from writing. You will pray with me, I know, for his recovery, for surely, Coleridge, an exquisiteness of feeling like this must border on derangement. But I love him more and more, and will not give up the hope of his speedy recovery, as he tells me he is under Dr. Darwin's regimen.*

God bless us all, and shield us from insanity, which is "the sorest malady of all."

My kind love to your wife and child.

C. LAMB.

Pray write soon.

* Poor Charles Lloyd! These apprehensions were sadly realized. Delusions of the most melancholy kind thickened over his latter days—yet left his admirable intellect free for the finest processes of severe reasoning. At a time when, like Cowper, he

As summer advanced, Lamb discerned a hope of compensation for the disappointment of last year, by a visit to Coleridge, and thus expressed his wishes.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

I discern a possibility of my paying you a visit next week. May I, can I, shall I, come as soon? Have you *room* for me, leisure for me, and are you all pretty well? Tell me all this honestly—immediately. And by what *day*-coach could I come soonest and nearest to Stowey? A few months hence may suit you better; certainly me, as well. If so, say so. I long, I yearn, with all the longings of a child do I desire to see you, to come among you—to see the young philosopher, to thank Sara for her last year's invitation in person—to read your tragedy—to read over together our little book—to breathe fresh air—to revive in me vivid images of "Salutation scenery." There is a sort of sacrilege in my letting such ideas slip out of my

believed himself the especial subject of Divine wrath, he could bear his part in the most subtle disquisition on questions of religion, morals, and poetry, with the nicest accuracy of perception and the most exemplary candour; and, after an argument of hours, revert, with a faint smile, to his own despair!

mind and memory. Still that R—— remaineth—a thorn in the side of Hope, when she would lean towards Stowey. Here I will leave off, for I dislike to fill up this paper, which involves a question so connected with my heart and soul, with meaner matter or subjects to me less interesting. I can talk, as I can think, nothing else. *Thursday.*

C. LAMB.

The visit was enjoyed; the book was published; and Lamb was once more left to the daily labours of the India House and the unceasing anxieties of his home. His feelings, on the recurrence of the season, which had, last year, been darkened by his terrible calamity, will be understood from the first of two pieces of blank verse, which fill the two first sheets of a letter to Coleridge, written under an apprehension of some neglect on the part of his friend, which had its cause in no estrangement of Coleridge's affections, but in the vicissitudes of the imaginative philosopher's fortune and the constancy of his day-dreamings.

WRITTEN A TWELVEMONTH AFTER THE EVENTS.

[*Friday next, Coleridge, is the day on which my mother died.*]

Alas! how am I chang'd! where be the tears,
The sobs, and forc'd suspensions of the breath,
And all the dull desertions of the heart
With which I hung o'er my dear mother's corse?
Where be the blest subsidings of the storm
Within; the sweet resignedness of hope
Drawn heavenward, and strength of filial love,
In which I bow'd me to my Father's will?
My God and my Redeemer, keep not thou
My heart in brute and sensual thanklessness
Seal'd up, oblivious ever of that dear grace,
And health restor'd to my long-loved friend.
Long lov'd, and worthy known! Thou didst not keep
Her soul in death. O keep not now, my Lord,
Thy servant's in far worse—in spiritual death
And darkness—blacker than those feared shadows
Of the valley all must tread. Lend us thy balms,
Thou dear Physician of the sin-sick soul,
And heal our cleansed bosoms of the wounds
With which the world hath pierc'd us thro' and thro'
Give us new flesh, new birth; elect of heaven
May we become, in thine election sure
Contain'd, and to one purpose stedfast drawn—
Our souls' salvation.
Thou and I, dear friend,
With filial recognition sweet, shall know
One day the face of our dear mother in heaven,
And her remember'd looks of love shall greet
With answering looks of love, her placid smiles

Meet with a smile as placid, and her hand
With drops of fondness wet, nor fear repulse.*

Be witness for me, Lord, I do not ask
Those days of vanity to return again,
(Nor fitting me to ask, nor thee to give),
Vain loves, and "wanderings with a fair-hair'd maid:"
(Child of the dust as I am), who so long
My foolish heart steep'd in idolatry,
And creature-loves. Forgive it, O my Maker!
If in a mood of grief, I sin almost
In sometimes brooding on the days long past,
(And from the grave of time wishing them back,)
Days of a mother's fondness to her child—
Her little one! Oh, where be now those sports
And infant play-games? Where the joyous troops
Of children, and the haunts I did so love?
O my companions! O ye loved names
Of friend, or playmate dear, gone are ye now.
Gone divers ways; to honour and credit some;
And some, I fear, to ignominy and shame!†
I only am left, with unavailing grief
Am left, with a few friends, and one above
The rest found faithful in a length of years,
Contented as I may to bear me on,
I' the not unpeaceful evening of a day
Made black by morning storms.

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* [Note in the margin of MS.] "This is almost literal from a letter of my sister's—less than a year ago."

† [Note in the margin of MS.] "Alluding to some of my old play-fellows being, literally, 'on the town,' and some otherwise wretched."

The following I wrote when I had returned from C. Lloyd, leaving him behind at Burton, with Southey. To understand some of it, you must remember that at that time he was very much perplexed in mind.

A stranger, and alone, I past those scenes
We past so late together ; and my heart
Felt something like desertion, as I look'd
Around me, and the pleasant voice of friend
Was absent, and the cordial look was there
No more to smile on me. I thought on Lloyd—
All he had been to me ! And now I go
Again to mingle with a world impure ;
With men who make a mock of holy things,
Mistaken, and on man's best hope think scorn.
The world does much to warp the heart of man ;
And I may sometimes join its idiot laugh :
Of this I now complain not. Deal with me,
Omniscient Father, as thou judgest best,
And in *thy* season soften thou my heart.
I pray not for myself : I pray for him
Whose soul is sore perplexed. Shine thou on him,
Father of lights ! and in the difficult paths
Make plain his way before him : his own thoughts
May he not think—his own ends not pursue—
So shall he best perform thy will on earth.
Greatest and Best, Thy will be ever ours !

The former of these poems I wrote with unusual celerity t'other morning at office. I expect you to like it better than anything of mine ; Lloyd does, and I do myself.

You use Lloyd very ill, never writing to him. I tell you again that his is not a mind with which you should play tricks. He deserves more tenderness from you.

For myself, I must spoil a little passage of Beaumont and Fletcher to adapt it to my feelings:—

> "I am prouder
> That I was once your friend, tho' now forgot,
> Than to have had another true to me."

If you don't write to me now, as I told Lloyd, I shall get angry, and call you hard names—Manchineel and I don't know what else. I wish you would send me my great-coat. The snow and the rain season is at hand, and I have but a wretched old coat, once my father's, to keep 'em off, and that is transitory.

> "When time drives flocks from field to fold,
> When ways grow foul and blood gets cold,"

I shall remember where I left my coat. Meet emblem wilt thou be, old Winter, of a friend's neglect—cold, cold, cold!

C. LAMB.

At this time, the only literary man whom Lamb knew in London was George Dyer, who had been

noted as an accomplished scholar, in Lamb's early childhood, at Christ's Hospital. For him Lamb cherished all the esteem that his guileless simplicity of character and gentleness of nature could inspire; in these qualities the friends were akin; but no two men could be more opposite than they were to each other, in intellectual qualifications and tastes —Lamb, in all things original, and rejoicing in the quaint, the strange, the extravagant; Dyer, the quintessence of learned commonplace; Lamb wildly catching the most evanescent spirit of wit and poetry; Dyer, the wondering disciple of their established forms. Dyer officiated as a revering High Priest at the Altar of the Muses—such as they were in the staid, antiquated trim of the closing years of the eighteenth century, before they formed sentimental attachments in Germany, or flirted with revolutionary France, or renewed their youth by drinking the Spirit of the Lakes. Lamb esteemed and loved him so well, that he felt himself entitled to make sport with his peculiarities; but it was as Fielding might sport with his own idea of Parson Adams; or Goldsmith with his Dr. Primrose. The following passage occurs in a letter of November, 1798, addressed—

TO MR. SOUTHEY.

I showed my "Witch," and "Dying Lover," to Dyer last night, but George could not comprehend how that could be poetry which did not go upon ten feet, as George and his predecessors had taught it to do; so George read me some lectures on the distinguishing qualities of the Ode, the Epigram, and the Epic, and went home to illustrate his doctrine, by correcting a proof sheet of his own Lyrics. George writes odes where the rhymes, like fashionable man and wife, keep a comfortable distance of six or eight lines apart, and calls that "observing the laws of verse." George tells you, before he recites, that you must listen with great attention, or you 'll miss the rhymes. I did so, and found them pretty exact. George, speaking of the dead Ossian, exclaimeth, "Dark are the poet's eyes." I humbly represented to him that his own eyes were dark, and many a living bard's besides, and suggested to him, "Clos'd are the poet's eyes." But that would not do. I found there was an antithesis between the darkness of his eyes and the splendour of his genius; and I acquiesced.

The following passage on the same subject occurs in a letter about the same time, addressed

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

Now I am on the subject of poetry, I must announce to you, who, doubtless, in your remote part of the island, have not heard tidings of so great a blessing, that George Dyer hath prepared two ponderous volumes full of poetry and criticism. They impend over the town and are threatened to fall in the winter. The first volume contains every sort of poetry, except personal satire, which George, in his truly original prospectus, renounceth for ever, whimsically cloisting the intention in between the price of his book and the proposed number of subscribers. (If I can, I will get you a copy of his *handbill*). He has tried his verse in every species besides — the Spenserian, Thomsonian, Masonic and Akensidish more especially. The second volume is all criticism; wherein he demonstrates to the entire satisfaction of the literary world, in a way that must silence all reply for ever, that the Pastoral was introduced by Theocritus and polished by Virgil and Pope—that Gray and Mason (who always hunt in couples in

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George's brain) have a good deal of poetical fire and true lyric genius—that Cowley was ruined by excess of wit (a warning to all moderns)—that Charles Lloyd, Charles Lamb, and William Wordsworth, in later days, have struck the true chords of poesy. O George, George! with a head uniformly wrong, and a heart uniformly right, that I had power and might equal to my wishes; then would I call the gentry of thy native island, and they should come in troops, flocking at the sound of thy prospectus-trumpet, and crowding who should be first to stand on thy list of subscribers! I can only put twelve shillings into thy pocket (which, I will answer for them, will not stick there long), out of a pocket almost as bare as thine. Is it not a pity so much fine writing should be wasted? But, to tell the truth, I began to scent that I was getting into that sort of style which Longinus and Dionysius Halicarnassus fitly call "the affected."

In 1799, Coleridge seemed to attain a settled home by accepting an invitation to become the minister of a Unitarian congregation at Shrewsbury; a hope of short duration. The following letter was addressed by Lamb to him at

this time, as "S. T. Coleridge"—as if the Mr. were dropped and the "Reverend" not quite adopted—"at the Reverend A. Rowe's, Shrewsbury, Shropshire." The tables are turned here; —Lamb, instead of accusing Coleridge of neglect, takes the charge to himself, in deep humility of spirit, and regards the effect of Miss Lamb's renewed illnesses on his mind as inducing indifference, with an affecting self-jealousy.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

You have writ me many kind letters, and I have answered none of them. I don't deserve your attentions. An unnatural indifference has been creeping on me since my last misfortunes, or I should have seized the first opening of a correspondence with *you*. To you I owe much, under God. In my brief acquaintance with you in London, your conversations won me to the better cause, and rescued me from the polluting spirit of the world. I might have been a worthless character without you; as it is, I do possess a certain improvable portion of devotional feelings, tho' when I view myself in the light of divine truth,

and not according to the common measures of human judgment, I am altogether corrupt and sinful. This is no cant. I am very sincere.

These last afflictions, Coleridge, have failed to soften and bend my will. They found me unprepared. My former calamities produced in me a spirit of humility and a spirit of prayer. I thought they had sufficiently disciplined me; but the event ought to humble me; if God's judgments now fail to take away from me the heart of stone, what more grievous trials ought I not to expect? I have been very querulous, impatient under the rod—full of little jealousies and heart burnings.—I had well nigh quarrelled with Charles Lloyd—and for no other reason, I believe, than that the good creature did all he could to make me happy. The truth is, I thought he tried to force my mind from its natural and proper bent; he continually wished me to be from home, he was drawing me *from* the consideration of my poor dear Mary's situation, rather than assisting me to gain a proper view of it with religious consolations. I wanted to be left to the tendency of my own mind, in a solitary state, which, in times past, I knew had led to a quietness and a patient bearing of the

yoke. He was hurt that I was not more constantly with him, but he was living with White, a man to whom I had never been accustomed to impart my *dearest feelings*, tho' from long habits of friendliness, and many a social and good quality, I loved him very much. I met company there sometimes—indiscriminate company. Any society almost, when I am in affliction, is sorely painful to me. I seem to breathe more freely, to think more collectedly, to feel more properly and calmly, when alone. All these things the good creature did with the kindest intentions in the world, but they produced in me nothing but soreness and discontent. I became, as he complained, "jaundiced" towards him . . . but he has forgiven me—and his smile, I hope, will draw all such humours from me. I am recovering, God be praised for it, a healthiness of mind, something like calmness—but I want more religion—I am jealous of human helps and leaning-places. I rejoice in your good fortunes. May God at last settle you!—You have had many and painful trials; humanly speaking, they are going to end; but we should rather pray that discipline may attend us thro' the whole of our lives. . . . . A careless and a dissolute

spirit has advanced upon *me* with large strides—pray God that my present afflictions may be sanctified to me! Mary is recovering; but I see no opening yet of a situation for us or her; your invitation went to my very heart, but you have a power of exciting interest, leading all hearts captive, too forcible to admit of Mary's being with you. I consider her as perpetually on the brink of madness. I think, you would almost make her dance within an inch of the precipice; she must be with duller fancies, and cooler intellects. In answer to your suggestions of occupation for me, I must say that I do not think my capacity altogether suited for disquisitions of that kind. . . . I have read little, I have a very weak memory, and retain little of what I read; am unused to compositions in which any methodising is required; but I thank you sincerely for the hint, and shall receive it as far as I am able, that is, endeavour to engage my mind in some constant and innocent pursuit. I know my capacities better than you do.

Accept my kindest love, and believe me yours, as ever. C. L.

The prospect of obtaining a residence more

suited to the peculiar exigencies of his situation than that which he then occupied at Pentonville, gave Lamb comfort, which he expressed in the following short letter:—

TO MR. MANNING.

DEAR MANNING,

I feel myself unable to thank you sufficiently for your kind letter. It was doubly acceptable to me, both for the choice poetry and the kind honest prose which it contained. It was just such a letter as I should have expected from Manning.

I am in much better spirits than when I wrote last. I have had a very eligible offer to lodge with a friend in town. He will have rooms to let at midsummer, by which time I hope my sister will be well enough to join me. It is a great object to me to live in town, where we shall be much more *private*, and to quit a house and a neighbourhood where poor Mary's disorder, so frequently recurring, has made us a sort of marked people. We can be nowhere private except in the midst of London. We shall be in a family whom we visit very frequently; only my landlord and I

have not yet come to a conclusion. He has a partner to consult. I am still on the tremble, for I do not know where we could go into lodgings that would not be, in many respects, highly exceptionable. Only God send Mary well again, and I hope all will be well! The prospect, such as it is, has made me quite happy. I have just time to tell you of it, as I know it will give you pleasure.—Farewell.

C. LAMB.

This hope was accomplished, as appears from the following letter:—

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

DEAR COLERIDGE,

Soon after I wrote to you last, an offer was made me by G—— (you must remember him, at Christ's,—you saw him, slightly, one day with Thomson at our house)—to come and lodge with him, at his house in Southampton Buildings, Chancery-lane. This was a very comfortable offer to me, the rooms being at a reasonable rent, and including the use of an old servant, besides being

infinitely preferable to ordinary lodgings *in our case*, as you must perceive. As G—— knew all our story and the perpetual liability to a recurrence in my sister's disorder, probably to the end of her life, I certainly think the offer very generous and very friendly. I have got three rooms (including servant) under 34*l.* a year. Here I soon found myself at home; and here, in six weeks after, Mary was well enough to join me. So we are once more settled. I am afraid we are not placed out of the reach of future interruptions. But I am determined to take what snatches of pleasure we can between the acts of our distressful drama . . . I have passed two days at Oxford, on a visit which I have long put off, to G——'s family. The sight of the Bodleian Library, and, above all, a fine bust of Bishop Taylor, at All Souls', were particularly gratifying to me; unluckily, it was not a family where I could take Mary with me, and I am afraid there is something of dishonesty in any pleasures I take without *her*. She never goes anywhere. I do not know what I can add to this letter. I hope you are better by this time; and I desire to be affectionately remembered to Sara and Hartley.

I expected before this to have had tidings of

another little philosopher. Lloyd's wife is on the point of favouring the world.

Have you seen the new edition of Burns? his posthumous works and letters? I have only been able to procure the first volume, which contains his life—very confusedly and badly written, and interspersed with dull pathological and *medical* discussions. It is written by a Dr. Currie. Do you know the well-meaning doctor? Alas, *ne sutor ultra crepidam!*

I hope to hear again from you very soon. Godwin is gone to Ireland on a visit to Grattan. Before he went I passed much time with him, and he has showed me particular attention: N.B. A thing I much like. Your books are all safe; only I have not thought it necessary to fetch away your last batch, which I understand are at Johnson's, the bookseller, who has got quite as much room, and will take as much care of them as myself—and you can send for them immediately from him.

I wish you would advert to a letter I sent you at Grassmere about Christabel, and comply with my request contained therein.

Love to all friends round Skiddaw.

C. LAMB.

CHAPTER IV.

MISCELLANEOUS LETTERS TO MANNING, COLERIDGE, AND WORDSWORTH, FROM 1800 TO 1805.

It would seem from the letters of 1800, that the natural determination of Lamb "to take what pleasure he could between the acts of his distressful drama," had led him into a wider circle of companionship, and had prompted sallies of wilder and broader mirth, which afterwards softened into delicacy, retaining all its whim. The following passage, which concludes a letter to Manning, else occupied with merely personal details, proves that his apprehensions for the diminution of his reverence for sacred things were not wholly unfounded; while, amidst its grotesque expressions, may be discerned the repugnance to the philosophical infidelity of some of his companions he retained through life. The passage, may, perhaps, be regarded as a sort of desperate compromise between

a wild gaiety and religious impressions obscured but not effaced; and intimating his disapprobation of infidelity, with a melancholy sense of his own unworthiness seriously to express it.

TO MR. MANNING.

Coleridge inquires after you pretty often. I wish to be the pandar to bring you together again once before I die. When we die, you and I must part; the sheep, you know, take the right hand, and the goats the left. Stripped of its allegory, you must know, the sheep are *I*, and the Apostles and the Martyrs, and the Popes, and Bishop Taylor and Bishop Horsley, and Coleridge, &c. &c.; the goats are the Atheists and the Adulterers, and dumb dogs, and Godwin and M . . . . . g, and that Thyestæan crew—yaw! how my saintship sickens at the idea!

You shall have my play and the Falstaff letters in a day or two. I will write to Lloyd by this day's post.

God bless you, Manning. Take my trifling *as trifling*—and believe me seriously and deeply your well-wisher and friend, C. LAMB.

In the following letter Lamb's fantastic spirits find scope freely, though in all kindness, in the peculiarities of the learned and good George Dyer.

TO MR. MANNING.

DEAR MANNING,

You needed not imagine any apology necessary. Your fine hare and fine birds (which just now are dangling by our kitchen blaze), discourse most eloquent music in your justification. You just nicked my palate. For, with all due decorum and leave may it be spoken, my worship hath taken physic to-day, and being low and puling, requireth to be pampered. Foh! how beautiful and strong those buttered onions come to my nose. For you must know we extract a divine spirit of gravy from those materials, which, duly compounded with a consistence of bread and cream (y'clept bread-sauce), each to each, giving double grace, do mutually illustrate and set off (as skilful gold foils to rare jewels) your partridge, pheasant, woodcock, snipe, teal, widgeon, and the other lesser daughters of the ark. Mrs. Friendship, struggling

with my carnal and fleshly prudence (which suggests that a bird or man is the proper allotment in such cases), yearneth sometimes to have thee here to pick a wing or so. I question if your Norfolk sauces match our London cookery.

George Dyer has introduced me to the table of an agreeable old gentleman, Dr. A——, who gives hot legs of mutton and grape pies at his sylvan lodge at Isleworth; where, in the middle of a street, he has shot up a wall most preposterously before his small dwelling, which, with the circumstance of his taking seven panes of glass out of bedroom windows (for air), causeth his neighbours to speculate strangely on the state of the good man's pericranicks. Plainly, he lives under the reputation of being deranged. George does not mind this circumstance; he rather likes him the better for it. The Doctor, in his pursuits, joins agricultural to poetical science, and has set George's brains mad about the old Scotch writers, Barbour, Douglas's Æneid, Blind Harry, &c. We returned home in a return postchaise (having dined with the Doctor), and George kept wondering and wondering, for eight or nine turnpike miles, what was the name, and striving to recollect the name of a

poet anterior to Barbour. I begged to know what was remaining of his works. "There is nothing extant of his works, Sir, but by all accounts he seems to have been a fine genius!" This fine genius, without anything to show for it, or any title beyond George's courtesy, without even a name; and Barbour, and Douglas, and Blind Harry, now are predominant sounds in George's pia mater, and their buzzings exclude politics, criticism, and algebra—the late lords of that illustrious lumber-room. Mark, he has never read any of these bucks, but is impatient till he reads them *all* at the Doctor's suggestion. Poor Dyer! his friends should be careful what speeches they let fall into such inflammable matter.

Could I have my will of the heathen, I would lock him up from all access of new ideas; I would exclude all critics that would not swear first (upon their Virgil) that they would feed him with nothing but the old, safe, familiar notions and sounds (the rightful aborigines of his brain)—Gray, Akenside, and Mason. In these sounds, reiterated as often as possible, there could be nothing painful, nothing distracting.

God bless me, here are the birds, smoking hot!

All that is gross and unspiritual in me rises at the sight!

Avaunt friendship, and all memory of absent friends!

C. LAMB.

In the following letter, the exciting subjects of Dr. A—— and Dyer are further played on.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

George Dyer is the only literary character I am happily acquainted with; the oftener I see him, the more deeply I admire him. He is goodness itself. If I could but calculate the precise date of his death, I would write a novel on purpose to make George the hero. I could hit him off to a hair.* George brought a Dr. A—— to see me. The Doctor is a very pleasant old man, a great genius for agriculture, one that ties his breeches-knees with a packthread, and boasts of having

* This passage, thus far, is printed in the former volumes; the remainder was then suppressed (with other passages *now* for the first time published) relating to Mr. Dyer, lest they should give pain to that excellent person then living.

had disappointments from ministers. The Doctor happened to mention an epic poem by one Wilkie, called the "Epigoniad," in which he assured us there is not one tolerable line from beginning to end, but all the characters, incidents, &c., verbally copied from *Homer*. George, who had been sitting quite inattentive to the Doctor's criticism, no sooner felt the sound of *Homer* strike his pericranicks, than up he gets, and declares he must see that poem immediately: where was it to be had? An epic poem of 8000 lines, and *he* not hear of it! There must be some things good in it, and it was necessary he should see it, for he had touched pretty deeply upon that subject in his criticism on the Epic. George has touched pretty deeply upon the Lyric, I find; he has also prepared a dissertation upon the Drama and the comparison of the English and German theatres. As I rather doubted his competency to do the latter, knowing that his peculiar *turn* lies in the lyric species of composition, I questioned George what English plays he had read. I found that he *had* read Shakspeare (whom he calls an original, but irregular, genius); but it was a good while ago; and he has dipped into Rowe and Otway, I suppose having found their verses in

"Johnson's Lives" at full length; and upon this slender ground he has undertaken the task. He never seemed even to have heard of Fletcher, Ford, Marlowe, Massinger, and the worthies of Dodsley's Collection; but he is to read all these, to prepare him for bringing out his "Parallel" in the winter. I find he is also determined to vindicate Poetry from the shackles which Aristotle and some others have imposed upon it, which is very good-natured of him, and very necessary just now. Now I am touching so *deeply* upon poetry, can I forget that I have just received from D—— a magnificent copy of his Guinea Epic. Four-and-twenty Books to read in the dog-days! I got as far as the Mad Monk the first day, and fainted. Mr. D——'s genius strongly points him to the *Pastoral*, but his inclinations divert him perpetually from his calling. He imitates Southey, as Rowe did Shakspeare, with his "Good morrow to ye; good master Lieutenant." Instead of *a* man, *a* woman, *a* daughter, he constantly writes one a man, one a woman, one his daughter. Instead of *the* king, *the* hero, he constantly writes, he the king, he the hero; two flowers of rhetoric, palpably from the "Joan." But Mr. D—— soars a

higher pitch; and when he *is* original, it is in a most original way indeed. His terrific scenes are indefatigable. Serpents, asps, spiders, ghosts, dead bodies, staircases made of nothing, with adders' tongues for bannisters—Good Heaven! what a brain he must have. He puts as many plums in his pudding as my grandmother used to do;—and then his emerging from Hell's horrors into light, and treading on pure flats of this earth —for twenty-three Books together!

C. L.

The following letter, obviously written about the same time, pursues the same theme. There is some iteration in it; but even *that* is curious enough to prevent the excision of the reproduced passages.

TO MR. MANNING.

Dear Manning,

I am going to ask a favour of you, and am at a loss how to do it in the most delicate manner. For this purpose I have been looking into Pliny's Letters, who is noted to have had the best grace in begging of all the ancients (I read

him in the elegant translation of Mr. Melmoth,) but not finding any case there exactly similar with mine, I am constrained to beg in my own barbarian way. To come to the point then, and hasten into the middle of things; have you a copy of your Algebra to give away? I do not ask it for myself; I have too much reverence for the Black Arts, ever to approach thy circle, illustrious Trismegist! But that worthy man, and excellent poet, George Dyer, made me a visit yesternight, on purpose to borrow one, supposing, rationally enough, I must say, that you had made me a present of one before this; the omission of which I take to have proceeded only from negligence; but it is a fault. I could lend him no assistance. You must know he is just now diverted from the pursuit of the BELL LETTERS by a paradox, which he has heard his friend,* (that learned mathematician) maintain, that the negative quantities of mathematicians were *meræ nugæ*, things scarcely *in rerum naturâ*, and smacking too much of mystery for

* Mr. Frend, many years the Actuary of the Rock Insurance Office, in early life the champion of Unitarianism at Cambridge; the object of a great University's displeasure; in short, the "village Hampden" of the day.

gentlemen of Mr. Frend's clear Unitarian capacity. However, the dispute once set a-going, has seized violently on George's pericranicks; and it is necessary for his health that he should speedily come to a resolution of his doubts. He goes about teasing his friends with his new mathematics; he even frantically talks of purchasing Manning's Algebra, which shows him far gone, for, to my knowledge, he has not been master of seven shillings a good time. George's pockets and ———'s brains are two things in nature which do not abhor a vacuum. . . . . Now, if you could step in, on this trembling suspense of his reason, and he should find on Saturday morning, lying for him at the Porter's Lodge, Clifford's Inn,—his safest address—Manning's Algebra, with a neat manuscription in the blank leaf, running thus, "FROM THE AUTHOR!" it might save his wits and restore the unhappy author to those studies of poetry and criticism, which are at present suspended, to the infinite regret of the whole literary world. N.B.—Dirty covers, smeared leaves, and dog's ears, will be rather a recommendation than otherwise. N.B.—He must have the book as soon as possible, or nothing can withhold him from madly

purchasing the book on tick . . . Then shall we see him sweetly restored to the chair of Longinus —to dictate in smooth and modest phrase the laws of verse; to prove that Theocritus first introduced the Pastoral, and Virgil and Pope brought it to its perfection; that Gray and Mason (who always hunt in couples in George's brain) have shown a great deal of poetical fire in their lyric poetry; that Aristotle's rules are not to be servilely followed, which George has shown to have imposed great shackles upon modern genius. His poems, I find, are to consist of two vols.—reasonable octavo; and a third book will exclusively contain criticisms, in which he has gone *pretty deeply* into the laws of blank verse and rhyme—epic poetry, dramatic and pastoral ditto—all which is to come out before Christmas. But above all he has *touched* most *deeply* upon the Drama, comparing the English with the modern German stage, their merits and defects. Apprehending that his *studies* (not to mention his *turn*, which I take to be chiefly towards the lyrical poetry) hardly qualified him for these disquisitions, I modestly inquired what plays he had read? I found George's reply was that he *had* read Shakspeare, but that was a good while

since: he calls him a great, irregular genius, which I think to be an original and just remark. Beaumont and Fletcher, Massinger, Ben Jonson, Shirley, Marlowe, Ford, and the worthies of Dodsley's Collection—he confessed he had read none of them, but professed his *intention* of looking through them all, so as to be able to *touch* upon them in his book. So Shakspeare, Otway, and I believe Rowe, to whom he was naturally directed by Johnson's Lives, and these not read lately, are to stand him instead of a general knowledge of the subject. God bless his dear absurd head!

By the bye, did I not write you a letter with something about an invitation in it?—but let that pass; I suppose it is not agreeable.

N.B. It would not be amiss if you were to accompany your *present* with a dissertation on negative quantities.

C. L.

The "Algebra" arrived; and Lamb wrote the following invitation, in hope to bring the author and the presentee together.

TO MR. MANNING.

George Dyer is an Archimedes and an Archimagus, and a Tycho Brahé, and a Copernicus; and thou art the darling of the Nine, and midwife to their wandering babe also! We take tea with that learned poet and critic on Tuesday night, at half-past five, in his neat library; the repast will be light and Attic, with criticism. If thou couldst contrive to wheel up thy dear carcase on the Monday, and after dining with us on tripe, kidneys, or whatever else the Cornucopia of St. Clare may be willing to pour out on the occasion, might we not adjourn together to the heathen's—thou with thy Black Backs, and I with some innocent volume of the Bell Letters, Shenstone or the like: it would make him wash his old flannel gown (that has not been washed to my knowledge since it has been *his*—Oh the long time!) with tears of joy. Thou shouldst settle his scruples, and unravel his cobwebs, and sponge off the sad stuff that weighs upon his dear wounded pia mater; thou wouldst restore light to his eyes, and him to his friends and the public; Parnassus should shower her civic crowns on thee for saving the wits of a citizen! I thought

I saw a lucid interval in George the other night—he broke in upon my studies just at tea-time, and brought with him Dr. A——, an old gentleman who ties his breeches' knees with packthread, and boasts that he has been disappointed by ministers. The Doctor wanted to see *me*; for I being a poet, he thought I might furnish him with a copy of verses to suit his Agricultural Magazine. The Doctor, in the course of the conversation, mentioned a poem called the "Epigoniad" by one Wilkie, an epic poem, in which there is not one tolerable line all through, but every incident and speech borrowed from Homer. George had been sitting inattentive, seemingly, to what was going on—hatching of negative quantities—when, suddenly, the name of his old friend, Homer, stung his pericranicks, and, jumping up, he begged to know where he could meet with Wilkie's works. "It was a curious fact that there should be such an epic poem and he not know of it; and he *must* get a copy of it, as he was going to touch pretty deeply upon the subject of the Epic—and he was sure there must be some things good in a poem of 8000 lines!" I was pleased with this transient return of his reason and recurrence to his old ways of thinking: it gave me

great hopes of a recovery, which nothing but your book can completely insure. Pray come on Monday, if you *can*, and stay your own time. I have a good large room, with two beds in it, in the handsomest of which thou shalt repose a night, and dream of Spheroids. I hope you will understand by the nonsense of this letter that I am *not* melancholy at the thoughts of thy coming: I thought it necessary to add this, because you love *precision*. Take notice that our stay at Dyer's will not exceed eight o'clock, after which our pursuits will be our own. But indeed, I think a little recreation among the Bell Letters and poetry will do you some service in the interval of severer studies. I hope we shall fully discuss with George Dyer what I have never yet heard done to my satisfaction, the reason of Dr. Johnson's malevolent strictures on the higher species of the Ode.

Manning could not come; and Dyer's subsequent symptoms are described in the following letter—

TO MR. MANNING.

At length George Dyer's phrenesis has come to a crisis; he is raging and furiously mad. I waited

upon the heathen, Thursday se'nnight; the first symptom which struck my eye and gave me incontrovertible proof of the fatal truth was a pair of nankeen pantaloons four times too big for him, which the said heathen did pertinaciously affirm to be new. They were absolutely ingrained with the accumulated dirt of ages; but he affirmed them to be clean. He was going to visit a lady that was nice about those things, and that's the reason he wore nankeen that day. And he danced, and capered, and fidgeted, and pulled up his pantaloons, and hugged his intolerable flannel vestment closer about his poetic loins; anon he gave it loose to the zephyrs which plentifully insinuated their tiny bodies through every crevice, door, window, or wainscot, expressly formed for the exclusion of such impertinents. Then he caught at a proof sheet, and catched up a laundress's bill instead—made a dart at Bloomfield's Poems and threw them in agony aside. I could not bring him to one direct reply; he could not maintain his jumping mind in a right line for the tithe of a moment by Clifford's Inn clock. He must go to the printer's immediately—the most unlucky accident—he had struck off five hundred

impressions of his Poems, which were ready for delivery to subscribers, and the Preface must all be expunged; there were eighty pages of Preface, and not till that morning had he discovered that in the very first page of the said Preface he had set out with a principle of Criticism fundamentally wrong, which vitiated all his following reasoning; the Preface must be expunged, although it cost him 30*l.*, the lowest calculation, taking in paper and printing! In vain have his real friends remonstrated against this Midsummer madness. George is as sturdy in his resolution as a Primitive Christian—and wards and parries off all our thrusts with one unanswerable fence;—"Sir, it 's of great consequence that the *world* is not *misled!*"

I 've often wished I lived in the Golden Age, before doubt, and propositions, and corollaries, got into the world. *Now*, as Joseph D——, Bard of Nature, sings, going up Malvern Hills,

> "How steep! how painful the ascent;
> It needs the evidence of close *deduction*
> To know that ever I shall gain the top."

You must know that Joe is lame, so that he

had some reason for so saying. These two lines, I assure you, are taken *totidem literis* from a very *popular* poem. Joe is also an Epic poet as well as a Descriptive, and has written a tragedy, though both his drama and epopœia are strictly *descriptive*, and chiefly of the *beauties of Nature*, for Joe thinks man with all his passions and frailties not a proper subject of the *Drama*. Joe's tragedy hath the following surpassing speech in it. Some king is told that his enemy has engaged twelve archers to come over in a boat from an enemy's country and way-lay him; he thereupon pathetically exclaims—

"*Twelve*, dost thou say? Curse on those dozen villains!"

D—— read two of the acts out to us very gravely on both sides till he came to this heroic touch,—and then he asked what we laughed at? I had no more muscles that day. A poet who chooses to read out his own verses has but a limited power over you. There is a bound where his authority ceases.

The following letter, written sometime in 1801, shows that Lamb had succeeded in obtaining

occasional employment as a writer of epigrams for newspapers, by which he added something to his slender income. The disparaging reference to Sir James Mackintosh must not be taken as expressive of Lamb's deliberate opinion of that distinguished person. Mackintosh, at this time, was in great disfavour, for his supposed apostasy from the principles of his youth, with Lamb's philosophic friends, whose minds were of temperament less capable than that of the author of the *Vindiciæ Gallicæ* of being diverted from abstract theories of liberty by the crimes and sufferings which then attended the great attempt to reduce them to practice. Lamb, through life, utterly indifferent to politics, was always ready to take part with his friends, and probably scouted, with them, Mackintosh as a deserter.

TO MR. MANNING.

DEAR MANNING,

I have forborne writing so long (and so have you for the matter of that), until I am almost ashamed either to write or to forbear any longer. But as your silence may proceed from

some worse cause than neglect—from illness, or some mishap which may have befallen you, I begin to be anxious. You may have been burnt out, or you may have married, or you may have broken a limb, or turned country parson; any of these would be cause sufficient for not coming to my supper. I am not so unforgiving as the nobleman in Saint Mark. For me, nothing new has happened to me, unless that the poor Albion died last Saturday of the world's neglect, and with it the fountain of my puns is choked up for ever.

All the Lloyds wonder that you do not write to them. They apply to me for the cause. Relieve me from this weight of ignorance, and enable me to give a truly oracular response.

I have been confined some days with swelled cheek and rheumatism—they divide and govern me with a viceroy-headache in the middle. I can neither write nor read without great pain. It must be something like obstinacy that I choose this time to write to you after many months interruption.

I will close my letter of simple inquiry with an

epigram on Mackintosh, the *Vindiciæ Gallick*-man —who has got a place at last—one of the last I *did* for the Albion :

> "Though thou 'rt like Juda., an apostate black,
> In the resemblance one thing thou dost lack ;
> When he had gotten his ill-purchas'd pelf,
> He went away, and wisely hang'd himself :
> This thou may do at last, yet much I doubt
> If thou hast any *Bowels* to gush out ! "

Yours, as ever,

C. LAMB.

Some sportive extravagance which, however inconsistent with Lamb's early sentiments of reverent piety, was very far from indicating an irreligious purpose, seems to have given offence to Mr. Walter Wilson, and to have induced the following letter, illustrative of the writer's feelings at this time, on the most momentous of all subjects.

TO MR. WALTER WILSON.

DEAR WILSON,

I am extremely sorry that any serious difference should subsist between us, on account of some foolish behaviour of mine at Richmond ;

you knew me well enough before, that a very little liquor will cause a considerable alteration in me.

I beg you to impute my conduct solely to that, and not to any deliberate intention of offending you, from whom I have received so many friendly attentions. I know that you think a very important difference in opinion with respect to some more serious subjects between us makes me a dangerous companion; but do not rashly infer, from some slight and light expressions which I may have made use of in a moment of levity, in your presence, without sufficient regard to your feelings—do not, I pray you, conclude that I am an inveterate enemy to all religion. I have had a time of seriousness, and I have known the importance and reality of a religious belief. Latterly, I acknowledge, much of my seriousness has gone off, whether from new company, or some other new associations; but I still retain at bottom a conviction of the truth, and a certainty of the usefulness of religion. I will not pretend to more gravity or feeling than I at present possess; my intention is not to persuade you that any great alteration is probable in me; sudden converts are

superficial and transitory; I only want you to believe that I have *stamina* of seriousness within me, and that I desire nothing more than a return of that friendly intercourse which used to subsist between us, but which my folly has suspended.

Believe me, very affectionately, yours,

C. LAMB.

Friday, 14th August, 1801.

In 1803 Coleridge visited London, and at his departure left the superintendence of a new edition of his poems to Lamb. The following letter, written in reply to one of Coleridge's, giving a mournful account of his journey to the north with an old man and his influenza, refers to a splendid smoking-cap which Coleridge had worn at their evening meetings.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

MY DEAR COLERIDGE,

Things have gone on better with me since you left me. I expect to have my old housekeeper home again in a week or two. She has mended most rapidly. My health too has been better since you took away that Montero cap. I

have left off cayenned eggs and such bolsters to discomfort. There was death in that cap. I mischievously wished that by some inauspicious jolt the whole contents might be shaken, and the coach set on fire; for you said they had that property. How the old gentleman, who joined you at Grantham, would have clapt his hands to his knees, and not knowing but it was an immediate visitation of Heaven that burnt him, how pious it would have made him; him, I mean, that brought the Influenza with him, and only took places for one—an old sinner; he must have known what he had got with him! However, I wish the cap no harm, for the sake of the *head it fits*, and could be content to see it disfigure my healthy side-board again.

What do you think of smoking? I want your sober, *average*, *noon opinion* of it. I generally am eating my dinner about the time I should determine it.

Morning is a girl, and can't smoke—she's no evidence one way or the other; and Night is so *bought over*, that he can't be a very upright judge. May be the truth is, that *one* pipe is wholesome; *two* pipes toothsome; *three* pipes noisome; *four*

pipes fulsome, *five* pipes quarrelsome, and that's the *sum* on't. But that is deciding rather upon rhyme than reason. . . . After all, our instincts *may* be best. Wine I am sure, good, mellow, generous Port, can hurt nobody, unless those who take it to excess, which they may easily avoid if they observe the rules of temperance.

Bless you, old sophist, who next to human nature taught me all the corruption I was capable of knowing! And bless your Montero cap, and your train (which shall come after you whenever you appoint), and your wife and children—Pipos especially.

When shall we two smoke again? Last night I had been in a sad quandary of spirits, in what they call the evening, but a pipe, and some generous Port, and King Lear (being alone), had their effects as solacers. I went to bed pot-valiant. By the way, may not the Ogles of Somersetshire be remotely descended from King Lear?

C. L.

The next letter is prefaced by happy news.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

Mary sends love from home.

DEAR C.,

I do confess that I have not sent your books as I ought to have done; but you know how the human free-will is tethered, and that we perform promises to ourselves no better than to our friends. A watch is come for you. Do you want it soon, or shall I wait till some one travels your way? You, like me, reckon the lapse of time from the waste thereof, as boys let a cock run to waste; too idle to stop it, and rather amused with seeing it dribble. Your poems have begun printing; Longman sent to me to arrange them, the old and the new together. It seems you have left it to him; so I classed them, as nearly as I could, according to dates. First, after the Dedication, (which must march first,) and which I have transplanted from before the Preface, (which stood like a dead wall of prose between,) to be the first Poem—then comes "The Pixies," and the things most juvenile—then on "To Chatterton," &c.—on, lastly, to the "Ode on the Departing

Year," and "Musings,"—which finish. Longman wanted the Ode first, but the arrangement I have made is precisely that marked out in the Dedication, following the order of time. I told Longman I was sure that you would omit a good portion of the first edition. I instanced several sonnets, &c.—but that was not his plan, and, as you have done nothing in it, all I could do was to arrange them on the supposition that all were to be retained. A few I positively rejected; such as that of "The Thimble," and that of "Flicker and Flicker's wife," and that *not* in the manner of Spenser, which you yourself had stigmatised—and "The Man of Ross,"—I doubt whether I should this last. It is not too late to save it. The first proof is only just come. I have been forced to call that Cupid's Elixir, "Kisses." It stands in your first volume, as an Effusion, so that, instead of prefixing The Kiss to that of "One Kiss dear Maid," &c., I have ventured to entitle it "To Sara." I am aware of the nicety of changing even so mere a trifle as a title to so short a piece, and subverting old associations; but two called "Kisses" would have been absolutely ludicrous, and "Effusion" is no name, and these poems

come close together. I promise you not to alter one word in any poem whatever, but to take your last text, where two are. Can you send any wishes about the book? Longman, I think, should have settled with you; but it seems you have left it to him. Write as soon as you possibly can; for, without making myself responsible, I feel myself, in some sort, accessary to the selection, which I am to proof-correct; but I decidedly said to Biggs that I was sure you would omit more. Those I have positively rubbed off, I can swear to, *individually*, (except the "Man of Ross," which is too familiar in Pope,) but no others—you have your cue. For my part, I had rather all the *Juvenilia* were kept —*memoriæ causâ*.

Robert Lloyd has written me a masterly letter, containing a character of his father;—see how different from Charles he views the old man! (*Literatim.*) "My father smokes, repeats Homer in Greek, and Virgil, and is learning, when from business, with all the vigour of a young man, Italian. He is, really, a wonderful man. He mixes public and private business, the intricacies of disordering life with his religion and devotion.

No one more rationally enjoys the romantic scenes of nature, and the chit-chat and little vagaries of his children; and, though surrounded with an ocean of affairs, the very neatness of his most obscure cupboard in the house passes not unnoticed. I never knew any one view with such clearness, nor so well satisfied with things as they are, and make such allowance for things which must appear perfect Syriac to him." By the last he means the Lloydisms of the younger branches. His portrait of Charles, as far as he has had opportunities of noting him, is most exquisite. "Charles is become steady as a church, as straightforward as a Roman road. It would distract him to mention anything that was not as plain as sense; he seems to have run the whole scenery of life, and now rests as the formal precisian of non-existence." Here is genius I think, and 'tis seldom a young man, a Lloyd, looks at a father (so differing) with such good nature while he is alive. Write—

I am in post-haste,

C. LAMB.

Love, &c., to Sara, P. and H.

The next letter, containing a further account of Lamb's superintendence of the new edition, bears the date of Saturday, 27th May, 1803.

TO MR COLERIDGE.

Saturday, 27th May.

MY DEAR COLERIDGE,

The date of my last was one day prior to the receipt of your letter, full of foul omens. I explain, lest you should have thought mine too light a reply to such sad matter. I seriously hope by this time you have given up all thoughts of journeying to the green Islands of the Blest—voyages in time of war are very precarious—or at least, that you will take them in your way to the Azores. Pray be careful of this letter till it has done its duty, for it is to inform you that I have booked off your watch (laid in cotton like an untimely fruit), and with it Condillac, and all other books of yours which were left here. These will set out on Monday next, the 29th May, by Kendal, from White Horse, Cripplegate. You will make seasonable inquiries, for a watch mayn't come your way again in a hurry. I have been repeatedly after Tobin, and now hear that he is in the country, not

to return till middle of June. I will take care and see him with the earliest. But cannot you write pathetically to *him*, enforcing a speedy mission of your books for literary purposes? He is too good a retainer to Literature, to let her interests suffer through his default. And why are your books to travel from Barnard's Inn to the Temple, and thence circuitously to Cripplegate, when their business is to take a short cut down Holborn-hill, up Snow do., on to Wood-street, &c.? The former mode seems a sad superstitious subdivision of labour. Well! the "Man of Ross" is to stand; Longman begs for it; the printer stands with a wet sheet in one hand, and a useless Pica in the other, in tears, pleading for it; I relent. Besides, it was a Salutation poem, and has the mark of the beast Tobacco upon it. Thus much I have done; I have swept off the lines about *widows* and *orphans* in second edition, which (if you remember) you most awkwardly and illogically caused to be inserted between two *Ifs*, to the great breach and disunion of said *Ifs*, which now meet again (as in first edition), like two clever lawyers arguing a case. Another reason for subtracting the pathos was, that the "Man of Ross"

is too familiar, to need telling what he did, especially in worse lines than Pope told it, and it now stands simply as "Reflections at an Inn about a known Character," and making an old story into an accommodation with present feelings. Here is no breaking spears with Pope, but a new, independent, and really a very pretty poem. In fact 'tis as I used to admire it in the first volume, and I have even dared to restore

"If 'neath this roof thy *wine-cheer'd* moments pass,"

for

"Beneath this roof if thy cheer'd moments pass."

"Cheer'd" is a sad general word, "*wine-cheer'd*" I'm sure you'd give me, if I had a speaking-trumpet, to sound to you 300 miles. But I am your *factotum*, and that save in this instance, which is a single case (and I can't get at you), shall be next to a *fac-nihil*—at most, a *fac-simile*. I have ordered "Imitation of Spenser" to be restored on Wordsworth's authority; and now, all that you will miss will be "Flicker and Flicker's Wife," "The Thimble," "Breathe *dear harmonies*," and *I believe*, "The Child that was fed with Manna." Another volume will clear off all your Anthologic

Morning-Postian Epistolary Miscellanies; but, pray, don't put "Christabel" therein; don't let that sweet maid come forth attended with Lady Holland's mob at her heels. Let there be a separate volume of Tales, Choice Tales, "Ancient Mariners," &c.

C. LAMB.

The following is the fragment of a letter (part being lost), on the re-appearance of the Lyrical Ballads, in two volumes, and addressed

TO MR. WORDSWORTH.

Thanks for your letter and present. I had already borrowed your second volume. What most please me are, "The Song of Lucy;" *Simon's sickly daughter,* in "The Sexton," made me *cry*. Next to these are the description of the continuous echoes in the story of "Joanna's Laugh," where the mountains, and all the scenery absolutely seem alive; and that fine Shakspearian character of the "happy man," in the "Brothers,"

> ——— "that creeps about the fields,
> Following his fancies by the hour, to bring
> Tears down his cheek or solitary smiles
> Into his face, until the setting sun
> Write Fool upon his forehead!"

I will mention one more—the delicate and curious feeling in the wish for the "Cumberland Beggar," that he may have about him the melody of birds, altho' he hear them not. Here the mind knowingly passes a fiction upon herself, first substituting her own feelings for the Beggar's, and in the same breath detecting the fallacy, will not part with the wish. The "Poet's Epitaph" is disfigured, to my taste, by the common satire upon parsons and lawyers in the beginning, and the coarse epithet of "pinpoint," in the sixth stanza. All the rest is eminently good, and your own. I will just add that it appears to me a fault in the "Beggar," that the instructions conveyed in it are too direct, and like a lecture: they don't slide into the mind of the reader while he is imagining no such matter. An intelligent reader finds a sort of insult in being told, "I will teach you how to think upon this subject." This fault, if I am right, is in a ten-thousandth worse degree to be found in Sterne, and many many novelists and modern poets, who continually put a sign-post up to show where you are to feel. They set out with assuming their readers to be stupid; very different from "Robinson Crusoe," the "Vicar of Wakefield,"

"Roderick Random," and other beautiful, bare narratives. There is implied an unwritten compact between author and reader: "I will tell you a story, and I suppose you will understand it." Modern novels, "St. Leon" and the like, are full of such flowers as these—"Let not my reader suppose," "Imagine, if you can, &c."—modest! I will here have done with praise and blame. I have written so much, only that you may not think I have passed over your book without observation. . . . . I am sorry that Coleridge has christened his "Ancient Mariner" "a Poet's Reverie;" it is as bad as Bottom the Weaver's declaration that he is not a lion, but only the scenical representation of a lion. What new idea is gained by his title but one subversive of all credit—which the tale should force upon us,—of its truth?

For me, I was never so affected with any human tale. After first reading it, I was totally possessed with it for many days. I dislike all the miraculous part of it, but the feelings of the man under the operation of such scenery, dragged me along like Tom Pipes's magic whistle. I totally differ from the idea that the "Mariner" should have had a character and profession. This is a beauty in

"Gulliver's Travels," where the mind is kept in a placid state of little wonderments; but the "Ancient Mariner" undergoes such trials as overwhelm and bury all individuality or memory of what he was —like the state of a man in a bad dream, one terrible peculiarity of which is, that all consciousness of personality is gone. Your other observation is, I think as well, a little unfounded: the "Mariner," from being conversant in supernatural events, *has* acquired a super-nature and strange cast of *phrase*, eye, appearance, &c., which frighten the "wedding-guest." You will excuse my remarks, because I am hurt and vexed that you should think it necessary, with a prose apology, to open the eyes of dead men that cannot see.

To sum up a general opinion of the second volume, I do not feel any one poem in it so forcibly as the "Ancient Mariner," the "Mad Mother," and the "Lines at Tintern Abbey" in the first.

The following letter was addressed, on 28th November, 1805, when Lamb was bidding his generous farewell to Tobacco, to Wordsworth, then living in noble poverty with his sister in a cottage

by Grassmere, which is as sacred to some of his old admirers as even Shakspeare's House.

TO MR. WORDSWORTH.

My dear Wordsworth (or Dorothy rather, for to you appertains the biggest part of this answer by right), I will not again deserve reproach by so long a silence. I have kept deluding myself with the idea that Mary would write to you, but she is so lazy, (or I believe the true state of the case, so diffident,) that it must revert to me as usual; though she writes a pretty good style, and has some notion of the force of words, she is not always so certain of the true orthography of them; that, and a poor handwriting (in this age of female calligraphy), often deters her, where no other reason does.*

We have neither of us been very well for some weeks past. I am very nervous, and she most so at those times when I am; so that a merry friend, adverting to the noble consolation we were able to afford each other, denominated

* This is mere banter; Miss Lamb wrote a very good hand.

us, not inaptly, Gum-Boil and Tooth-Ache, for they used to say that a gum-boil is a great relief to a tooth-ache.

We have been two tiny excursions this summer for three or four days each, to a place near Harrow, and to Egham, where Cooper's Hill is; and that is the total history of our rusticatious this year. Alas! how poor a round to Skiddaw and Helvellyn, and Borrowdale, and the magnificent sesquipedalia of the year 1802. Poor old Molly! to have lost her pride, that "last infirmity of noble minds," and her cow. Fate need not have set her wits to such an old Molly. I am heartily sorry for her. Remember us lovingly to her; and in particular remember us to Mrs. Clarkson in the most kind manner.

I hope, by "southwards," you mean that she will be at or near London, for she is a great favourite of both of us, and we feel for her health as much as possible for any one to do. She is one of the friendliest, comfortablest women we know, and made our little stay at your cottage one of the pleasantest times we ever past. We were quite strangers to her. Mr. C. is with you too; our kindest separate remembrances to him.

As to our special affairs, I am looking about me. I have done nothing since the beginning of last year, when I lost my newspaper job, and having had a long idleness, I must do something, or we shall get very poor. Sometimes I think of a farce, but hitherto all schemes have gone off; an idle bray or two of an evening, vapouring out of a pipe, and going off in the morning; but now I have bid farewell to my "sweet enemy," Tobacco, as you will see in my next page,* I shall perhaps set nobly to work. Hang work!

I wish that all the year were holiday; I am sure that indolence—indefeasible indolence—is the true state of man, and business the invention of the old Teazer, whose interference doomed Adam to an apron and set him a hoeing. Pen and ink, and clerks and desks, were the refinements of this old torturer some thousand years after, under pretence of "Commerce allying distant shores, Promoting and diffusing knowledge, good," &c. &c.

Yours, &c.

C. LAMB.

* The "Farewell t Tobacco" was transcribed on the next page; but the actual sacrifice was not completed till some years after.

CHAPTER V.

LETTERS TO HAZLITT, ETC., FROM 1805 TO 1810.

About the year 1805 Lamb was introduced to one, whose society through life was one of his chief pleasures — the great critic and thinker, William Hazlitt — who, at that time, scarcely conscious of his own literary powers, was striving hard to become a painter. At the period of the following letter (which is dated 15th March, 1806,) Hazlitt was residing with his father, an Unitarian minister, at Wem.

TO MR. HAZLITT.

Dear H.

I am a little surprised at no letter from you. This day week, to wit, Saturday, the 8th of March, 1806, I book'd off by the Wem coach,

Bull and Mouth Inn, directed to *you*, at the Rev. Mr. Hazlitt's, Wem, Shropshire, a parcel containing, besides a book, &c., a rare print, which I take to be a Titian; begging the said W. H. to acknowledge the receipt thereof; which he not having done, I conclude the said parcel to be lying at the inn, and may be lost; for which reason, lest you may be a Wales-hunting at this instant, I have authorised any of your family, whosoever first gets this, to open it, that so precious a parcel may not moulder away for want of looking after. What do you in Shropshire when so many fine pictures are a-going a-going every day in London? Monday I visit the Marquis of Lansdowne's, in Berkeley Square. Catalogue 2*s.* 6*d.* Leonardos in plenty. Some other day this week, I go to see Sir Wm. Young's, in Stratford Place. Hulse's, of Blackheath, are also to be sold this month, and in May, the first private collection in Europe, Welbore Ellis Agar's. And there are you perverting Nature in lying landscapes, filched from old rusty Titians, such as I can scrape up here to send you, with an additament from Shropshire nature thrown in to make the whole look unnatural. I am afraid of your

mouth watering when I tell you that Manning and I got into Angerstein's on Wednesday. *Mon Dieu!* Such Claudes! Four Claudes bought for more than 10,000*l.* (those who talk of Wilson being equal to Claude are either mainly ignorant or stupid); one of them was perfectly miraculous. What colours short of *bonâ fide* sunbeams it could be painted in, I am not earthly colourman enough to say; but I did not think it had been in the possibility of things. Then, a music-piece of Titian—a thousand-pound picture—five figures standing behind a piano, the sixth playing; none of the heads, M. observed, indicating great men, nor affecting it, but so sweetly disposed; all leaning separate ways, but so easy, like a flock of some divine shepherd; the colouring, like the economy of the picture, so sweet and harmonious—as good as Shakspeare's "Twelfth Night,"—*almost*, that is. It will give you a love of order, and cure you of restless, fidgetty passions for a week after—more musical than the music which it would, but cannot, yet in a manner *does*, show. I have no room for the rest. Let me say, Angerstein sits in a room—his study, (only that and the library are shown), when he writes a common letter, as I am doing,

surrounded with twenty pictures worth 60,000*l.* What a luxury! Apicius and Heliogabalus, hide your diminished heads!

Yours, my dear painter,

C. Lamb.

Hazlitt married Miss Sarah Stoddart, sister of the present Sir John Stoddart, who became very intimate with Lamb and his sister. To her Lamb, on the 11th December, 1806, thus communicated the failure of "Mr. H."

TO MRS. HAZLITT.

11*th Dec.*

Don't mind this being a queer letter. I am in haste, and taken up by visitors, condolers, &c.

God bless you.

Dear Sarah,

Mary is a little cut at the ill sucess of "Mr. H." which came out last night, and *failed.* I know you'll be sorry, but never mind. We are determined not to be cast down. I am going to leave off tobacco, and then we must thrive. A smoking man must write smoky farces.

Mary is pretty well, but I persuaded her to let me write. We did not apprise you of the coming out of "Mr. H." for fear of ill-luck. You were better out of the house. If it had taken, your partaking of our good luck would have been one of our greatest joys. As it is, we shall expect you at the time you mentioned. But whenever you come, you shall be most welcome.

God bless you, dear Sarah,

Yours, most truly,

C. L.

Mary is by no means unwell, but I made her let me write.

The following is Lamb's account of the same calamity, addressed

TO MR. WORDSWORTH.

Mary's love to all of you—I wouldn't let her write.

11th Dec.

DEAR WORDSWORTH,

"Mr. H." came out last night, and failed. I had many fears; the subject was not substantial enough. John Bull must have solider fare than

a *letter*. We are pretty stout about it; have had plenty of condoling friends; but, after all, we had rather it should have succeeded. You will see the prologue in most of the morning papers. It was received with such shouts as I never witnessed to a prologue. It was attempted to be encored. How hard!—a thing I did merely as a task, because it was wanted, and set no great store by; and "Mr. H."!!

A hundred hisses! (Hang the word, I write it like kisses—how different!)—a hundred hisses outweigh a thousand claps. The former come more directly from the heart. Well, 'tis withdrawn, and there is an end.

Better luck to us,

[*Turn over.*] C. LAMB.

P.S. Pray, when any of you write to the Clarksons, give our kind loves, and say we shall not be able to come and see them at Christmas, as I shall have but a day or two, and tell them we bear our mortification pretty well.

Hazlitt, coming to reside in town, became a frequent guest of Lamb's, and a brilliant ornament of the parties which Lamb now began to collect

on Wednesday evenings. He seems, in the beginning of 1808, to have sought solitude in a little inn on Salisbury Plain, to which he became deeply attached, and which he has associated with some of his profoundest meditations; and some fantastic letter, in the nature of a hoax, having puzzled his father, who expected him at Wem, caused some inquiries of Lamb respecting the painter's retreat, to which he thus replied in a letter to

THE REV. MR. HAZLITT.

Temple, 18th Feb., 1808.

SIR,

I am truly concerned that any mistake of mine should have caused you uneasiness, but I hope we have got a clue to William's absence, which may clear up all apprehensions. The people where he lodges in town have received direction from him to forward some linen to a place called Winterslow, in the county of Wilts (not far from Salisbury), where the lady lives whose cottage, pictured upon a card, if you opened my letter you have doubtless seen, and though we have had no explanation of the mystery since, we

shrewdly suspect, that at the time of writing that letter which has given you all this trouble, a certain son of yours (who is both painter and author) was at her elbow, and did assist in framing that very cartoon which was sent to amuse and mislead us in town, as to the real place of his destination.

And some words at the back of the said cartoon, which we had not marked so narrowly before, by the similarity of the handwriting to William's, do very much confirm the suspicion. If our theory be right, they have had the pleasure of their jest, and I am afraid you have paid for it in anxiety.

But I hope your uneasiness will now be removed, and you will pardon a suspense occasioned by Love, who does so many worse mischiefs every day.

The letter to the people where William lodges says, moreover, that he shall be in town in a fortnight.

My sister joins in respect to you and Mrs. Hazlitt, and in our kindest remembrances and wishes for the restoration of Peggy's health,

I am, Sir, your humble servant,

C. Lamb.

Mr. and Mrs. Hazlitt afterwards took up their temporary abode at Winterslow, to which place Miss Lamb addressed the following letter, containing interesting details of her own and her brother's life, and illustrating her own gentle character.

TO MRS. HAZLITT.

My dear Sarah,

"I hear of you from your brother, but you do not write yourself, nor does Hazlitt. I beg that one or both of you will amend this fault as speedily as possible, for I am very anxious to hear of your health. I hope, as you say nothing about your fall to your brother, you are perfectly recovered from the effects of it.

You cannot think how very much we miss you and H. of a Wednesday evening—all the glory of the night, I may say, is at an end. P—— makes his jokes, and there is no one to applaud him; R—— argues, and there is no one to oppose him.

The worst miss of all to me is, that when we are in the dismals there is now no hope of relief

from any quarter whatsoever. Hazlitt was most brilliant, most ornamental, as a Wednesday man, but he was a more useful one on common days, when he dropt in after a fit of the glooms. The Sheffington is quite out now, my brother having got merry with claret and Tom Sheridan. This visit, and the occasion of it, is a profound secret, and therefore I tell it to nobody but you and Mrs. Reynolds. Through the medium of Wroughton, there came an invitation and proposal from T. S., that C. L. should write some scenes in a speaking pantomime, the other parts of which Tom now, and his father formerly, have manufactured between them. So in the Christmas holidays my brother, and his two great associates, we expect will be all three damned together; that is, I mean if Charles's share, which is done and sent in, is accepted.

I left this unfinished yesterday, in the hope that my brother would have done it for me. His reason for refusing me was "no exquisite reason," for it was because he must write a letter to Manning in three or four weeks, and therefore "he could not be always writing letters," he said. I wanted him to tell your husband about a great

work which Godwin is going to publish to enlighten the world once more, and I shall not be able to make out what it is. He (Godwin) took his usual walk one evening, a fortnight since, to the end of Hatton Garden and back again. During that walk a thought came into his mind, which he instantly sate down and improved upon till he brought it, in seven or eight days, into the compass of a reasonable sized pamphlet.

To propose a subscription to all well-disposed people to raise a certain sum of money, to be expended in the care of a cheap monument for the former and the future great dead men; the monument to be a white cross, with a wooden slab at the end, telling their names and qualifications. This wooden slab and white cross to be perpetuated to the end of time; to survive the fall of empires, and the destruction of cities, by means of a map, which, in case of an insurrection among the people, or any other cause by which a city or country may be destroyed, was to be carefully preserved; and then, when things got again into their usual order, the white-cross-wooden-slab-makers were to go to work again and set the wooden slabs in their former places. This, as nearly

as I can tell you, is the sum and substance of it; but it is written remarkably well—in his very best manner—for the proposal (which seems to me very like throwing salt on a sparrow's tail to catch him)' occupies but half a page, which is followed by very fine writing on the benefits he conjectures would follow if it were done: very excellent thoughts on death, and our feelings concerning dead friends, and the advantages an old country has over a new one, even in the slender memorials we have of great men who once flourished.

Charles is come home and wants his dinner, and so the dead men must be no more thought of. Tell us how you go on, and how you like Winterslow and winter evenings. Knowles has not got back again, but he is in better spirits. John Hazlitt was here on Wednesday. Our love to Hazlitt.

Yours, affectionately,

Saturday. M. LAMB.

To this letter Charles added the following postscript:—

There came this morning a printed prospectus

from "S. T. Coleridge, Grasmere," of a weekly paper, to be called 'The Friend;' a flaming prospectus. I have no time to give the heads of it. To commence first Saturday in January. There came also notice of a turkey from Mrs. Clarkson, which I am more sanguine in expecting the accomplishment of than I am of Coleridge's prophecy.

C. LAMB.

In the following summer Lamb, with his sister, spent his holidays with Mr. and Mrs. Hazlitt, at Winterslow. Their feelings on returning home are developed in the following letter of

MISS LAMB TO MRS. HAZLITT.

MY DEAR SARAH,

The dear, quiet, lazy, delicious month we spent with you is remembered by me with such regret that I feel quite discontented, and Winterslow-sick. I assure you I never passed such a pleasant time in the country in my life, both in the house and out of it—the card-playing quarrels, and a few gaspings for breath, after your swift footsteps up the high hills, excepted; and these

draw-backs are not unpleasant in the recollection. We have got some salt butter, to make our toast seem like yours, and we have tried to eat meat suppers, but that would not do, for we left our appetites behind us, and the dry loaf, which offended you, now comes in at night unaccompanied; but, sorry am I to add, it is soon followed by the pipe. We smoked the very first night of our arrival.

Great news! I have just been interrupted by Mr. Daw, who came to tell me he was, yesterday, elected a Royal Academician. He said none of his own friends voted for him, he got it by strangers, who were pleased with his picture of Mrs. White.

Charles says he does not believe Northcote ever voted for the admission of any one. Though a very cold day, Daw was in a prodigious perspiration, for joy at his good fortune.

More great news! My beautiful green curtains were put up yesterday, and all the doors listed with green baize, and four new boards put to the coal-hole, and fastening hasps put to the window, and my dyed Manning-silk cut out.

We had a good cheerful meeting on Wednesday,

much talk of Winterslow, its woods and its sunflowers. I did not so much like P.—— at Winterslow as I now like him for having been with us at Winterslow. We roasted the last "Beech of oily nut prolific" on Friday at the Captain's. Nurse is now established in Paradise, *alias* the Incurable ward of Westminster Hospital. I have seen her sitting in most superb state, surrounded by her seven incurable companions. They call each other ladies; nurse looks as if she would be considered as the first lady in the ward; only one seemed, at all, to rival her in dignity.

A man in the India House has resigned, by which Charles will get twenty-pounds a year, and White has prevailed on him to write some more lottery puffs; if that ends in smoke the twenty pounds is a sure card, and has made us very joyful.

I continue very well, and return you very sincere thanks for my good health and improved looks, which have almost made Mrs.—— die with envy. She longs to come to Winterslow as much as the spiteful elder sister did to go to the well for a gift to spit diamonds.

Jane and I have agreed to boil a round of beef

for your suppers when you come to town again. She (Jane) broke two of the Hogarth's glasses, while we were away, whereat I made a great noise. Farewell. Love to William, and Charles's love and good wishes for the speedy arrival of the "Life of Holcroft," and the bearer thereof.

Yours, most affectionately,

M. LAMB.

Tuesday.

Charles told Mrs. ——, Hazlitt had found a well in his garden, which, water being scarce in your county, would bring him in two-hundred a year; and she came, in great haste, the next morning, to ask me if it were true.

Your brother and sister are quite well.

The country excursions, with which Lamb sometimes occupied his weeks of vacation, were taken with fear and trembling — often foregone — and finally given up, in consequence of the sad effects which the excitements of travel and change produced in his beloved companion. The following refers to one of these disasters:—

TO MR. HAZLITT.

Dear H.

Epistemon is not well. Our pleasant excursion has ended sadly for one of us. You will guess I mean my sister. She got home very well (I was very ill on the journey) and continued so till Monday night, when her complaint came on, and she is now absent from home.

I am glad to hear you are all well. I think I shall be mad if I take any more journeys with two experiences against it. I find all well here. Kind remembrances to Sarah,—have just got her letter.

H. Robinson has been to Blenheim, he says you will be sorry to hear that we should not have asked for the Titian Gallery there. One of his friends knew of it, and asked to see it. It is never shown but to those who inquire for it.

The pictures are all Titians, Jupiter and Ledas, Mars and Venuses, &c., all naked pictures, which may be a reason they don't show it to females. But he says they are very fine; and perhaps it is shown separately to put another fee into the shower's pocket. Well, I shall never see it.

I have lost all wish for sights. God bless you. I shall be glad to see you in London.

Yours truly,

C. LAMB.

Thursday.

About the year 1808, Miss Lamb sought to contribute to her brother's scanty income by presenting the plots of some of Shakspeare's plays in prose, with the spirit of the poet's genius interfused, and many of his happiest expressions preserved, in which good work, Lamb assisted her; though he always insisted, as he did in reference to "Mrs. Leicester's School," that her portions were the best. The following letter refers to some of those aids, and gives a pleasant instance of that shyness in Hazlitt, which he never quite overcame, and which afforded a striking contrast to the boldness of his published thoughts.

TO MR. WORDSWORTH.

Mary is just stuck fast in "All's Well that Ends Well." She complains of having to set forth so many female characters in boys' clothes. She begins to think Shakspeare must have wanted

—Imagination. I, to encourage her, for she often faints in the prosecution of her great work, flatter her with telling her how well such a play and such a play is done. But she is stuck fast. I have been obliged to promise to assist her. To do this, it will be necessary to leave off tobacco. But I had some thoughts of doing that before, for I sometimes think it does not agree with me. W. Hazlitt is in town. I took him to see a very pretty girl, professedly, where there were two young girls—the very head and sum of the girlery was two young girls—they neither laughed, nor sneered, nor giggled, nor whispered—but they were young girls—and he sat and frowned blacker and blacker, indignant that there should be such a thing as youth and beauty, till he tore me away before supper, in perfect misery, and owned he could not bear young girls; they drove him mad. So I took him to my old nurse, where he recovered perfect tranquillity. Independent of this, and as I am not a young girl myself, he is a great acquisition to us. He is, rather imprudently I think, printing a political pamphlet on his own account, and will have to pay for the paper, &c. The first duty of an author, I take it, is never to pay

anything. But *non cuivis contigit adire Corinthum.* The managers, I thank my stars, have settled that question for me.

Yours truly,

C. LAMB.

In the following year, Lamb and his sister produced their charming little book of "Poetry for Children," and removed from Mitre Court to those rooms in Inner Temple Lane,—most dear of all their abodes to the memory of their ancient friends—where first I knew them. The change produced its natural and sad effect on Miss Lamb, during whose absence Lamb addressed the following various letter.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

DEAR COLERIDGE,

I congratulate you on the appearance of The Friend. Your first number promises well, and I have no doubt the succeeding numbers will fulfil the promise. I had a kind letter from you some time since, which I have left unanswered. I am also obliged to you, I believe, for a review in the Annual, am I not? The Monthly Review

sneers at me, and asks "if Comus is not *good enough* for Mr. Lamb?" because I have said no good serious dramas have been written since the death of Charles the First, except "Samson Agonistes;" so because they do not know, or won't remember, that Comus was written long before, I am to be set down as an undervaluer of Milton. O, Coleridge! do kill those reviews, or they will kill us; kill all we like! Be a friend to all else, but their foe. I have been turned out of my chambers in the Temple by a landlord who wanted them for himself, but I have got other at No. 4, Inner Temple Lane, far more commodious and roomy. I have two rooms on third floor and five rooms above, with an inner staircase to myself, and all new painted, &c., for £30 a year! I came into them on Saturday week; alas! on Monday following, Mary was taken ill with fatigue of moving, and affected, I believe, by the novelty of the home; she could not sleep; and I am left alone with a maid quite a stranger to me, and she has a month or two's sad distraction to go through. What sad large pieces it cuts out of life; out of *her* life, who is getting rather old; and we may not have many years to live together!

I am weaker, and bear it worse than I ever did. But I hope we shall be comfortable by and bye. The rooms are delicious, and the best look backwards into Hare Court, where there is a pump always going. Just now it is dry. Hare Court's trees come in at the window, so that it's like living in a garden. I try to persuade myself it is much pleasanter than Mitre Court; but, alas! the household gods are slow to consecrate a new mansion.' They are in their infancy to me; I do not feel them yet; no hearth has blazed to them yet. How I hate and dread new places!

I was very glad to see Wordsworth's book advertised; I am to have it to-morrow lent me, and if Wordsworth don't send me an order for one upon Longman, I will buy it. It is greatly extolled and liked by all who have seen it. Let me hear from some of you, for I am desolate. I shall have to send you, in a week or two, two volumes of Juvenile Poetry, done by Mary and me within the last six months, and that tale in prose which Wordsworth so much liked, which was published at Christmas, with nine others, by us, and has reached a second edition. There's for you! We have almost worked ourselves out

of child's work, and I don't know what to do. Sometimes I think of a drama, but I have no head for play-making; I can do the dialogue, and that's all. I am quite aground for a plan, and I must do something for money. Not that I have immediate wants, but I have prospective ones. O money, money, how blindly thou hast been worshipped, and how stupidly abused! Thou art health and liberty, and strength, and he that has thee may rattle his pockets at the foul fiend!

Nevertheless, do not understand by this that I have not quite enough for my occasions for a year or two to come. While I think on it, Coleridge, I fetch'd away my books which you had at the Courier Office, and I found all but a third volume of the old plays, containing "The White Devil," Green's "Tu Quoque," and the "Honest Whore," perhaps the most valuable volume of them all—*that* I could not find. Pray, if you can remember what you did with it, or where you took it with you a walking, perhaps; send me word, for, to use the old plea, it spoils a set. I found two other volumes (you had three), the "Arcadia," and Daniel, enriched with manuscript notes. I wish every book I have were so noted. They have

thoroughly converted me to relish Daniel, or to say I relish him, for, after all, I believe I did relish him. You well call him sober-minded. Your notes are excellent. Perhaps you 've forgot them. I have read a review in the Quarterly, by Southey, on the Missionaries, which is most masterly. I only grudge it being there. It is quite beautiful. Do remember my Dodsley; and, pray, do write, or let some of you write. Clarkson tells me you are in a smoky house. Have you cured it? It is hard to cure anything of smoking. Our little poems are but humble, but they have no name. You must read them, remembering they were task-work; and perhaps you will admire the number of subjects, all of children, picked out by an old Bachelor and an old Maid. Many parents would not have found so many. Have you read "Celebs?" It has reached eight editions in so many weeks, yet literally it is one of the very poorest sort of common novels, with the draw-back of dull religion in it. Had the religion been high and flavoured, it would have been something. I borrowed this "Celebs in Search of a Wife" of a very careful, neat lady, and returned it with this stuff written in the beginning :—

"If ever I marry a wife
I'd marry a landlord's daughter,
For then I may sit in the bar,
And drink cold brandy-and-water."

I don't expect you can find time from your Friend to write to me much, but write something, for there has been a long silence. You know Holcroft is dead. Godwin is well. He has written a pretty, absurd book about sepulchres. He was affronted because I told him it was better than Hervey, but not so good as Sir T. Browne. This letter is all about books; but my head aches, and I hardly know what I write; but I could not let The Friend pass without a congratulating epistle. I won't criticise till it comes to a volume. Tell me how I shall send my packet to you?—by what conveyance?—by Longman, Short-man, or how? Give my kindest remembrances to the Wordsworths. Tell him he must give me a book. My kind love to Mrs. W. and to Dorothy separately and conjointly. I wish you could all come and see me in my new rooms. God bless you all.

C. L.

A journey into Wiltshire, to visit Hazlitt, followed Miss Lamb's recovery, and produced the following letter:—

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

Monday, 30th Oct. 1809.

DEAR COLERIDGE,

I have but this moment received your letter, dated the 9th instant, having just come off a journey from Wiltshire, where I have been with Mary on a visit to Hazlitt. The journey has been of infinite service to her. We have had nothing but sunshiny days, and daily walks from eight to twenty miles a-day; have seen Wilton, Salisbury, Stonehenge, &c. Her illness lasted but six weeks; it left her very weak, but the country has made us whole. We came back to our Hogarth Room. I have made several acquisitions since you saw them, and found Nos. 8, 9, 10 of *The Friend*. The account of Luther in the Warteburg is as fine as anything I ever read.* God for-

* The Warteburg is a Castle, standing on a lofty rock, about two miles from the city of Eisenach, in which Luther was confined, under the friendly arrest of the Elector of Saxony, after Charles V. had pronounced against him the Ban in the Imperial Diet; where he composed some of his greatest works, and translated the New Testament; and where he is recorded as engaged in the personal conflict with the Prince of Darkness, of which the vestiges are still shown in a black stain on the wall,

bid that a man who has such things to say should be silenced for want of 100*l*. This Custom-and-Duty-Age would have made the Preacher on the

from the inkstand hurled at the Enemy. In the Essay referred to Coleridge accounts for the story—depicting the state of the great prisoner's mind in most vivid colours—and then presenting the following picture, which so nobly justifies Lamb's eulogy, that I venture to gratify myself by inserting it here.

"Methinks I see him sitting, the heroic student, in his chamber in the Warteburg, with his midnight lamp before him, seen by the late traveller in the distant plain of *Bischofsroda*, as a star on the mountain! Below it lies the Hebrew Bible open, on which he gazes; his brow pressing on his palm, brooding over some obscure text, which he desires to make plain to the simple boor and to the humble artizan, and to transfer its whole force into their own natural and living tongue. And he himself does not understand it! Thick darkness lies on the original text; he counts the letters, he calls up the roots of each separate word, and questions them as the familiar Spirits of an Oracle. In vain; thick darkness continues to cover it; not a ray of meaning dawns through it. With swollen and angry hope he reaches for the Vulgate, his old and sworn enemy, the treacherous confederate of the Roman Antichrist, which he so gladly, when he can, rebukes for idolatrous falsehood, that had dared place

> 'Within the sanctuary itself their shrines,
> Abominations'—

Now—O thought of humiliation—he must entreat its aid. See! there has the sly spirit of apostacy worked-in a phrase, which favours the doctrine of purgatory, the intercession of saints, or the efficacy of prayers for the dead; and what is worst of all, the interpretation is plausible. The original Hebrew might be forced into this meaning: and no other meaning seems to lie in

Mount take out a licence, and St. Paul's Epistles not missible without a stamp. O that you may find means to go on! But alas! where is Sir

it, none to hover *above* it in the heights of allegory, none to lurk *beneath* it even in the depths of Cabala! This is the work of the Tempter; it is a cloud of darkness conjured up between the truth of the sacred letters and the eyes of his understanding, by the malice of the evil-one, and for a trial of his faith! Must he then at length confess, must he subscribe the name of LUTHER to an exposition which consecrates a weapon for the hand of the idolatrous Hierarchy! Never! Never!

"There still remains one auxiliary in reserve, the translation of the Seventy. The Alexandrine Greeks, anterior to the Church itself, could intend no support to its corruptions—the Septuagint will have profaned the Altar of Truth with no incense for the nostrils of the universal Bishop to snuff up. And here again his hopes are baffled! Exactly at this perplexed passage had the Greek translator given his understanding a holiday, and made his pen supply its place. O honoured Luther! as easily mightest thou convert the whole City of Rome, with the Pope and the conclave of Cardinals inclusively, as strike a spark of light from the words, and *nothing but words*, of the Alexandrine version. Disappointed, despondent, enraged, ceasing to *think*, yet continuing his brain on the stretch in solicitation of a thought; and gradually giving himself up to angry fancies, to recollections of past persecutions, to uneasy fears, and inward defiances, and floating images of the Evil Being, their supposed personal author; he sinks, without perceiving it, into a trance of slumber; during which his brain retains its waking energies, excepting that what would have been mere *thoughts* before, now (the action and counterweight of his senses and of their impressions being withdrawn) shape and condense themselves into *things*, into realities! Repeatedly half-wakening, and his eye-lids as often re-closing, the

G. Beaumont?—Sotheby? What is become of the rich Auditors in Albemarle Street? Your letter has saddened me.

I am so tired with my journey, being up all night, I have neither things nor words in my power. I believe I expressed my admiration of the pamphlet. Its power over me was like that which Milton's pamphlets must have had on his contemporaries, who were tuned to them. What a piece of prose! Do you hear if it is read at all? I am out of the world of readers. I hate all that do read, for they read nothing but reviews and new books. I gather myself up into the old things.

objects which really surround him form the place and scenery of his dream. All at once he sees the arch-fiend coming forth on the wall of the room, from the very spot, perhaps, on which his eyes had been fixed, vacantly, during the perplexed moments of his former meditation: the inkstand which he had at the same time been using, becomes associated with it: and in that struggle of rage, which in these distempered dreams almost constantly precedes the helpless terror by the pain of which we are finally awakened, he *imagines* that he hurls it at the intruder, or not improbably in the first instant of awakening, while yet both his imagination and his eyes are possessed by the dream, he *actually* hurls it. Some weeks after, perhaps, during which interval he had often mused on the incident, undetermined whether to deem it a visitation of Satan to him in the body or out of the body, he discovers for the first time the dark spot on his wall, and receives it as a sign and pledge vouchsafed to him of the event having actually taken place."

I have put up shelves. You never saw a book-case in more true harmony with the contents, than what I have nailed up in a room, which, though new, has more aptitudes for growing old than you shall often see—as one sometimes gets a friend in the middle of life, who becomes an old friend in a short time. My rooms are luxurious; one is for prints and one for books; a summer and a winter-parlour. When shall I ever see you in them?

Mr. Wordsworth's Essay on Epitaphs, afterwards appended to "The Excursion," produced the following letter:—

TO MR. WORDSWORTH.

Friday, 19th Oct. 1810. *E. I. Ho:*

DEAR W.,

Mary has been very ill, which you have heard, I suppose, from the Montagues. She is very weak and low spirited now. I was much pleased with your continuation of the Essay on Epitaphs. It is the only sensible thing which has been written on that subject, and it goes to the bottom.

In particular I was pleased with your translation of that turgid epitaph into the plain feeling under it. It is perfectly a test. But what is the reason we have no good epitaphs after all?

A very striking instance of your position might be found in the churchyard of Ditton-upon-Thames, if you know such a place. Ditton-upon-Thames has been blessed by the residence of a poet, who, for love or money, I do not well know which, has dignified every grave-stone, for the last few years, with bran-new verses, all different, and all ingenious, with the author's name at the bottom of each. This sweet Swan of Thames has artfully diversified his strains and his rhymes; the same thought never occurs twice; more justly, perhaps, as no thought ever occurs at all, there was a physical impossibility that the same thought should recur. It is long since I saw and read these inscriptions, but I remember the impression was of a smug usher at his desk in the intervals of instruction, levelling his pen. Of death, as it consists of dust and worms, and mourners and uncertainty, he had never thought; but the word "death" he had often seen separate and conjunct with other words, till he had learned to speak of

all its attributes as glibly as Unitarian Belsham will discuss you the attributes of the word "God" in a pulpit; and will talk of infinity with a tongue that dangles from a skull that never reached in thought and thorough imagination two inches, or further than from his hand to his mouth, or from the vestry to the sounding-board of the pulpit.

But the epitaphs were trim, and sprag, and patent, and pleased the survivors of Thames Ditton above the old mumpsimus of "Afflictions Sore." . . . . To do justice though, it must be owned that even the excellent feeling which dictated this dirge when new, must have suffered something in passing through so many thousand applications, many of them no doubt quite misplaced, as I have seen in Islington churchyard (I think) an Epitaph to an infant, who died "*Ætatis* four months," with this seasonable inscription appended, "Honour thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long in the land," &c. Sincerely wishing your children long life to honour, &c.

I remain,

C. Lamb.

CHAPTER VI.

LETTERS TO WORDSWORTH, ETC., CHIEFLY RESPECTING WORDSWORTH'S POEMS; 1815 TO 1818.

THE admirers of Wordsworth—few, but energetic and hopeful—were delighted, and his opponents excited to the expression of their utmost spleen, by the appearance, in 1814, of two volumes of poems, some new and some old, and subsequently of "The Excursion," in the quarto form, marked by the bitter flippancy of Lord Byron. The following letters are chiefly expressive of Lamb's feelings respecting these remarkable works, and the treatment which his own Review of the latter received from Mr. Gifford, then the Editor of the Quarterly Review, for which it was written. The first, however, to Mrs. Wordsworth's sister, who resided with the poet at Rydal, relates to matters of yet nearer interest.

TO MISS HUTCHINSON.

Thursday, 19th Oct. 1815.

DEAR MISS H.,

I am forced to be the replier to your letter, for Mary has been ill, and gone from home these five weeks yesterday. She has left me very lonely, and very miserable. I stroll about, but there is no rest but at one's own fireside, and there is no rest for me there now. I look forward to the worse half being past, and keep up as well as I can. She has begun to show some favourable symptoms. The return of her disorder has been frightfully soon this time, with scarce a six months' interval. I am almost afraid my worry of spirits about the E. I. House was partly the cause of her illness, but one always imputes it to the cause next at hand; more probably it comes from some cause we have no control over, or conjecture of. It cuts such great slices out of the time, the little time, we shall have to live together. I don't know but the recurrence of these illnesses might help me to sustain her death better than if we had had no partial separations. But I won't talk of death.

I will imagine us immortal, or forget that we are otherwise. By God's blessing, in a few weeks we may be taking our meal together, or sitting in the front row of the Pit at Drury Lane, or taking our evening walk past the theatres, to look at the outside of them, at least, if not to be tempted in. Then we forget we are assailable; we are strong for the time as rocks;—"the wind is tempered to the shorn Lambs." Poor C. Lloyd, and poor Priscilla! I feel I hardly feel enough for him; my own calamities press about me, and involve me in a thick integument not to be reached at by other folk's misfortunes. But I feel all I can—all the kindness I can, towards you all—God bless you! I hear nothing from Coleridge.

Yours truly,

C. LAMB.

The following three letters best speak for themselves:—

TO MR. WORDSWORTH.

DEAR WORDSWORTH,

Thanks for the books you have given me and for all the books you mean to give me. I will

bind up the Political Sonnets and Ode according to your suggestion. I have not bound the poems yet. I wait till people have done borrowing them. I think I shall get a chain and chain them to my shelves, *more Bodleiano*, and people may come and read them at chain's length. For of those who borrow, some read slow; some mean to read but don't read; and some neither read nor mean to read, but borrow to leave you an opinion of their sagacity. I must do my money-borrowing friends the justice to say that there is nothing of this caprice or wantonness of alienation in them. When they borrow my money they never fail to make use of it. Coleridge has been here about a fortnight. His health is tolerable at present, though beset with temptations. In the first place, the Covent Garden Manager has declined accepting his Tragedy, though (having read it) I see no reason upon earth why it might not have run a very fair chance, though it certainly wants a prominent part for a Miss O'Neil or a Mr. Kean. However, he is going to-day to write to Lord Byron to get it to Drury. Should you see Mrs. C., who has just written to C. a letter, which I have given him, it will be as well to say nothing

about its fate, till some answer is shaped from Drury. He has two volumes printing together at Bristol, both finished as far as the composition goes; the latter containing his fugitive poems, the former his Literary Life. Nature, who conducts every creature, by instinct, to its best end, has skilfully directed C. to take up his abode at a Chymist's Laboratory in Norfolk-street. She might as well have sent a *Helluo Librorum* for cure to the Vatican. God keep him inviolate among the traps and pitfalls! He has done pretty well as yet.

Tell Miss H., my sister is every day wishing to be quietly sitting down to answer her very kind letter, but while C. stays she can hardly find a quiet time; God bless him!

Tell Mrs. W. her postscripts are always agreeable. They are so legible too. Your manual-graphy is terrible, dark as Lycophron. "Likelihood," for instance, is thus typified. . . .* I should not wonder if the constant making out of such paragraphs is the cause of that weakness in Mrs. W.'s eyes, as she is tenderly pleased to express it. Dorothy, I hear, has mounted spectacles; so you

* Here is a most inimitable scrawl.

have deoculated two of your dearest relations in life. Well, God bless you, and continue to give you power to write with a finger of power upon our hearts what you fail to impress, in corresponding lucidness, upon our outward eye-sight!

Mary's love to all; she is quite well.

I am called off to do the deposits in Cotton Wool—but why do I relate this to you, who want faculties to comprehend the great mystery of deposits, of interest, of warehouse rent, and contingent fund? Adieu!

C. LAMB.

A longer letter when C. is gone back into the country, relating his success, &c.—*my* judgment of *your* new books, &c., &c.—I am scarce quiet enough while he stays.

Yours again, C. L.

TO MR. WORDSWORTH.

The conclusion of this epistle getting gloomy, I have chosen this part to desire *our* kindest loves to Mrs. Wordsworth and to Dorothea. Will none of you ever be in London again?

DEAR WORDSWORTH,

You have made me very proud with your successive book presents. I have been carefully through the two volumes, to see that nothing was omitted which used to be there. I think I miss nothing but a character in antithetic manner, which I do not know why you left out,—the moral to the boys building the giant, the omission whereof leaves it, in my mind, less complete,—and one admirable line gone (or something come instead of it), "the stone-chat, and the glancing sand-piper," which was a line quite alive. I demand these at your hand. I am glad that you have not sacrificed a verse to those scoundrels. I would not have had you offer up the poorest rag that lingered upon the stript shoulders of little Alice Fell, to have atoned all their malice; I would not have given 'em a red cloak to save their souls. I am afraid lest the substitution of a shell (a flat falsification of the history) for the household implement, as it stood at first, was a kind of tub thrown out to the beast, or rather thrown out for him. The tub was a good honest tub in its place, and

nothing could fairly be said against it. You said you made the alteration for the "friendly reader," but the "malicious" will take it to himself. If you give 'em an inch, &c. The Preface is noble, and such as you should write. I wish I could set my name to it, *Imprimatur*,—but you have set it there yourself, and I thank you. I had rather be a door-keeper in your margin, than have their proudest text swelling with my eulogies. The poems in the volumes, which are new to me, are so much in the old tone, that I hardly received them as novelties. Of those, of which I had no previous knowledge, the "Four Yew Trees," * and the mysterious company which you have assembled there, most struck me—"Death the Skeleton and Time the Shadow." It is a sight not for every youthful poet to dream of; it is one of the last results he must have gone thinking on for years for. "Laodamia" is a very original poem; I mean original with reference to your own manner. You have nothing like it. I should

* The poem on the four great yew trees of Borrowdale, which the poet has, by the most potent magic of the imagination, converted into a temple for the ghastly forms of Death and Time "to meet at noontide,"—a passage surely not surpassed in any English poetry written since the days of Milton.

have seen it in a strange place, and greatly admired it, but not suspected its derivation.

Let me in this place, for I have writ you several letters naming it, mention that my brother, who is a picture-collector, has picked up an undoubtable picture of Milton. He gave a few shillings for it, and could get no history with it, but that some old lady had had it for a great number of years. Its age is ascertainable from the state of the canvas, and you need only see it to be sure that it is the original of the heads in the Tonson editions, with which we are all so well familiar. Since I saw you I have had a treat in the reading way, which comes not every day,* the Latin Poems of V. Bourne, which were quite new to me. What a heart that man had, all laid out upon town scenes, a proper counterpoise to *some people's* rural extravaganzas. Why I mention him is, that your "Power of Music" reminded me of his poem of "The Ballad-singer in the Seven Dials." Do you remember his epigram on the old woman who taught Newton the A B C, which, after all, he says, he hesitates not to call Newton's "Principia?"

* The following little passage about Vincent Bourne has been previously printed.

I was lately fatiguing myself with going through a volume of fine words by Lord Thurlow; excellent words; and if the heart could live by words alone, it could desire no better regales; but what an aching vacuum of matter! I don't stick at the madness of it, for that is only a consequence of shutting his eyes and thinking he is in the age of the old Elizabeth poets. From thence I turned to V. Bourne. What a sweet, unpretending, pretty-mannered, *matter-ful* creature! sucking from every flower, making a flower of everything, his diction all Latin, and his thoughts all English. Bless him! Latin wasn't good enough for him. Why wasn't he content with the language which Gay and Prior wrote in?

I am almost sorry that you printed extracts from those first poems,* or that you did not print them at length. They do not read to me as they do all together. Besides, they have diminished the value of the original (which I possess) as a curiosity. I have hitherto kept them distinct in my mind as

* The "Evening Walk," and "Descriptive Sketches among the Alps"—Wordsworth's earliest poems—now happily restored in their entirety to their proper places in the poet's collected works.

referring to a particular period of your life. All the rest of your poems are so much of a piece, they might have been written in the same week; these decidedly speak of an earlier period. They tell more of what you had been reading. We were glad to see the poems "by a female friend."* The one on the wind is masterly, but not new to us. Being only three, perhaps you might have clapt a D. at the corner, and let it have past as a printer's mark to the uninitiated, as a delightful hint to the better instructed. As it is, expect a formal criticism on the poems of your female friend, and she must expect it. I should have written before, but I am cruelly engaged, and like to be. On Friday I was at office from ten in the morning (two hours dinner-except) to eleven at night; last night till nine. My business and office business in general have increased so; I don't mean I am there every night, but I must expect a great deal of it. I never leave till four, and do not keep a holiday now once in ten times, where I used to keep all red-letter days, and some five days besides, which I used to dub Nature's holidays. I have had my day. I had formerly little to do. So of the little

* By Miss Dorothea Wordsworth.

that is left of life, I may reckon two-thirds as dead, for time that a man calls his own is his life; and hard work and thinking about it taint even the leisuse hours,—stain Sunday with work-day contemplations. This is Sunday; and the head-ache I have is part late hours at work the two preceding nights, and part later hours over a consoling pipe after. But I find stupid acquiescence coming over me. I bend to the yoke, and it is almost with me and my household as with the man and his consort. "To them each evening had its glittering star, and every sabbath-day its golden sun"—to such straits am I driven for the life of life, Time! O that from that superfluity of holiday-leisure my youth wasted, "Age might but take some hours youth wanted not." N.B.—I have left off spirituous liquors for four or more months, with a moral certainty of its lasting.* Farewell, dear Wordsworth!

* * * * *

* Alas! for moral certainty in this moral but mortal world! Lamb's resolution to leave off spirituous liquors was a brave one; but he strengthened and rewarded it by such copious libations of porter, that his sister, for whose sake mainly he attempted the sacrifice, entreated him to "live like himself," and in a few weeks after this assurance he obeyed her.

O happy Paris, seat of idleness and pleasure! from some returned English I hear that not such a thing as a counting-house is to be seen in her streets,—scarce a desk. Earthquakes swallow up this mercantile city and its "gripple merchants," as Drayton hath it—"born to be the curse of this brave isle!" I invoke this, not on account of any parsimonious habit the mercantile interest may have, but, to confess truth, because I am not fit for an office.

Farewell, once more, from a head that is too ill to methodise, a stomach to digest, and all out of tune. Better harmonies await you!

C. LAMB.

TO MR. WORDSWORTH.

Excuse this maddish letter; I am too tired to write *in formâ*.

DEAR WORDSWORTH,

The more I read of your two last volumes, the more I feel it necessary to make my acknowledgments for them in more than one short letter. The "Night Piece," to which you refer me, I meant fully to have noticed; but, the fact is, I

come so fluttering and languid from business, tired with thoughts of it, frightened with fears of it, that when I get a few minutes to sit down to scribble (an action of the hand now seldom natural to me—I mean voluntary pen-work) I lose all presential memory of what I had intended to say, and say what I can, talk about Vincent Bourne, or any casual image, instead of that which I had meditated, (by the way, I must look out V. B. for you). So I had meant to have mentioned "Yarrow Visited," with that stanza, "But thou, that didst appear so fair;"* than which I think no lovelier stanza can be found in the wide world of poetry;—yet the poem, on the whole, seems condemned to leave behind it a melancholy of imperfect satisfaction, as if you had wronged the feeling with which, in what preceded it, you had resolved never to visit it, and as if the Muse had determined, in the most delicate manner, to make you, and *scarce make you*, feel it. Else, it is far superior to the other, which has but one exquisite verse in it, the last but one or the two last—this

* "But thou, that didst appear so fair
To fond imagination,
Dost rival in the light of day
Her delicate creation."

has all fine, except, perhaps, that *that* of "studious ease and generous cares," has a little tinge of the *less romantic* about it. "The Farmer of Tilsbury Vale" is a charming counterpart to "Poor Susan," with the addition of that delicacy towards aberrations from the strict path, which is so fine in the "Old Thief and the Boy by his side," which always brings water into my eyes. Perhaps it is the worse for being a repetition; "Susan" stood for the representative of poor *Rus in Urbe*. There was quite enough to stamp the moral of the thing never to be forgotten; "bright volumes of vapour," &c. The last verse of Susan was to be got rid of, at all events. It threw a kind of dubiety upon Susan's moral conduct. Susan is a servant maid. I see her trundling her mop, and contemplating the whirling phenomenon through blurred optics; but to term her "a poor outcast" seems as much as to say that poor Susan was no better than she should be, which I trust was not what you meant to express. Robin Goodfellow supports himself without that *stick* of a moral which you have thrown away; but how I can be brought in *felo de omittendo* for that ending to the Boy-builders is a mystery. I can't say

positively now,—I only know that no line oftener or readier occurs than that "Light-hearted boys, I will build up a Giant with you." It comes naturally, with a warm holiday, and the freshness of the blood. It is a perfect summer amulet, that I tie round my legs to quicken their motion when I go out a maying. (N.B.) I don't often go out a maying;—*Must* is the tense with me now. Do you take the pun? Young Romilly is divine;* the reasons of his mother's grief being remediless —I never saw parental love carried up so high, towering above the other loves—Shakspeare had

* The admirable little poem, entitled "The Force of Prayer," developing the depths of a widowed mother's grief, whose only son has been drowned in attempting to leap over the precipice of the "Wharf" at Bolton Abbey. The first line, printed in old English characters, from some old English ballad,

"What is good for a bootless bene?"

suggests Miss Lamb's single pun. The following are the profoundest stanzas among those which excite her brother's most just admiration:—

"If for a lover the lady wept,
A solace she might borrow
From death, and from the passion of death;—
Old Wharf might heal her sorrow.

"She weeps not for the wedding-day,
Which was to be to-morrow:
Her hope was a further-looking hope,
And hers is a mother's sorrow."

done something for the filial, in Cordelia, and, by implication, for the fatherly too, in Lear's resentment; he left it for you to explore the depths of the maternal heart. I get stupid, and flat, and flattering; what's the use of telling you what good things you have written, or—I hope I may add—that I know them to be good? Apropos—when I first opened upon the just-mentioned poem, in a careless tone, I said to Mary, as if putting a riddle, "*What is good for a bootless bene?*" To which, with infinite presence of mind, (as the jest-book has it) she answered, "a shoeless pea." It was the first she ever made. Joke the second I make. You distinguish well, in your old preface, between the verses of Dr. Johnson, of the "Man in the Strand," and that from "The Babes in the Wood." I was thinking, whether taking your own glorious lines—

> "And from the love which was in her soul
> For her youthful Romilly;"

which, by the love I bear my own soul, I think have no parallel in any, the best old ballads, and just altering it to—

> "And from the great respect she felt
> For Sir Samuel Romilly,"

would not have explained the boundaries of prose expression, and poetic feeling, nearly as well. Excuse my levity on such an occasion. I never felt deeply in my life if that poem did not make me, both lately and when I read it in MS. No alderman ever longed after a haunch of buck venison more than I for a spiritual taste of that "White Doe" you promise. I am sure it is superlative, or will be when *drest*, *i. e.*, printed. All things read raw to me in MS.; to compare *magna parvis*, I cannot endure my own writings in that state. The only one which I think would not very much win upon me in print is Peter Bell. But I am not certain. You ask me about your preface. I like both that and the supplement without an exception. The account of what you mean by imagination is very valuable to me. It will help me to like some things in poetry better, which is a little humiliating in me to confess. I thought I could not be instructed in that science (I mean the critical), as I once heard old obscene, beastly Peter Pindar, in a dispute on Milton, say he thought that if he had reason to value himself upon one thing more than another, it was in knowing what good verse was. Who

looked over your proof-sheets and left *ordebo* in that line of Virgil?

My brother's picture of Milton is very finely painted, that is, it might have been done by a hand next to Vandyke's. It is the genuine Milton, and an object of quiet gaze for the half-hour at a time. Yet though I am confident there is no better one of him, the face does not quite answer to Milton.

There is a tinge of *petit* (or *petite*, how do you spell it?) querulousness about it; yet, hang it! now I remember better, there is not; it is calm, melancholy and poetical. *One* of the copies of the poems you sent has precisely the same pleasant blending of a sheet of second volume with a sheet of first. I think it was page 245; but I sent it and had it rectified. It gave me, in the first impetus of cutting the leaves, just such a cold squelch as going down a plausible turning and suddenly reading "No thoroughfare." Robinson's is entire: I wish you would write more criticism about 'Spenser, &c. I think I could say something about him myself, but, bless me! these "merchants and their spicy drugs," which are so harmonious to sing of, they lime-twig up my

poor soul and body, till I shall forget I ever thought myself a bit of a genius! I can't even put a few thoughts on paper for a newspaper. I "engross" when I should "pen" a paragraph. Confusion blast all mercantile transactions, all traffic, exchange of commodities, intercourse between nations, all the consequent civilisation, and wealth, and amity, and link of society, and getting rid of prejudices, and knowledge of the face of the globe; and rot the very firs of the forest, that look so romantic alive, and die into desks! *Vale.*

Yours, dear W., and all yours,

C. LAMB.

The following letter is in acknowledgment of an early copy of "The Excursion."

TO MR. WORDSWORTH.

DEAR WORDSWORTH,

I cannot tell you how pleased I was at the receipt of the great armful of poetry which you have sent me; and to get it before the rest of the world too! I have gone quite through with

it, and was thinking to have accomplished that pleasure a second time before I wrote to thank you, but M. B. came (in while we were out) and made holy theft of it, but we expect restitution in a day or two. It is the noblest conversational poem I ever read — a day in Heaven. The part (or rather main body) which has left the sweetest odour on my memory (a bad term for the remains of an impression so recent) is the Tales of the Church-yard;—the only girl among seven brethren, born out of due time, and (not duly) taken away again;—the deaf man and the blind man;—the Jacobite and Hanoverian, whom antipathies reconcile; the Scarron-entry of the rusticating parson upon his solitude;—these were all new to me too. My having known the story of Margaret (at the beginning), a very old acquaintance, even as long back as when I saw you first at Stowey, did not make her reappearance less fresh. I don't know what to pick out of this best of books upon the best subjects for partial naming. That gorgeous sunset is famous;* I think it must have been the identical one we saw on Salisbury Plain

* The passage to which the allusion applies does not picture a sunset, but the effect of sunlight on a receding mist among the mountains, in the second book of "The Excursion."

five years ago, that drew P—— from the card-table, where he had sat from rise of that luminary to its unequalled setting; but neither he nor I had gifted eyes to see those symbols of common things glorified, such as the prophets saw them in that sunset—the wheel, the potter's clay, the washpot, the wine-press, the almond-tree rod, the baskets of figs, the fourfold visaged head, the throne, and Him that sat thereon.*

One feeling I was particularly struck with, as what I recognised so very lately at Harrow Church on entering it after a hot and secular day's pleasure, the instantaneous coolness and calming, almost transforming properties of a country church just entered; a certain fragrance which it has, either from its holiness, or being kept shut all the week, or the air that is let in being pure country, exactly what you have reduced into words —but I am feeling that which I cannot express. The reading your lines about it fixed me for a

* "Fix'd resemblances were seen
To implements of ordinary use,
But vast in size, in substance glorified;
Such as by Hebrew Prophets were beheld
In vision—forms uncouth of mightiest powers,
For admiration and mysterious awe."

time, a monument in Harrow Church; do you know it? with its fine long spire, white as washed marble, to be seen, by vantage of its high site, as far as Salisbury spire itself almost.

I shall select a day or two, very shortly, when I am coolest in brain, to have a steady second reading, which I feel will lead to many more, for it will be a stock book with me while eyes or spectacles shall be lent me. There is a great deal of noble matter about mountain scenery, yet not so much as to overpower and discountenance a poor Londoner or south-countryman entirely, though Mary seems to have felt it occasionally a little too powerfully, for it was her remark during reading it, that by your system it was doubtful whether a liver in towns had a soul to be saved. She almost trembled for that invisible part of us in her.

Save for a late excursion to Harrow, and a day or two on the banks of the Thames this summer, rural images were fast fading from my mind, and by the wise provision of the Regent, all that was country-like in the Parks is all but obliterated. The very colour of green is vanished; the whole surface of Hyde Park is dry crumbling sand

(*Arabia Arenosa*), not a vestige or hint of grass ever having grown there; booths and drinking-places go all round it for a mile and a half, I am confident—I might say two miles in circuit—the stench of liquors, *bad* tobacco, dirty people and provisions, conquers the air, and we are stifled and suffocated in Hyde Park.

Lamb was delighted with the proposition, made through Southey, that he should review "The Excursion" in the "Quarterly"—though he had never before attempted contemporaneous criticism, and cherished a dislike to it, which the event did not diminish. The ensuing letter was addressed while meditating on his office, and uneasy lest he should lose it for want of leisure.

TO MR. WORDSWORTH.

My dear W.

I have scarce time or quiet to explain my present situation, how unquiet and distracted it is, owing to the absence of some of my compeers, and to the deficient state of payments at E. I. H.,

owing to bad peace speculations in the calico market. (I write this to W. W., Esq., Collector of Stamp Duties for the conjoint Northern Counties, not to W. W., Poet). I go back, and have for these many days past, to evening work, generally at the rate of nine hours a-day. The nature of my work, too, puzzling and hurrying, has so shaken my spirits, that my sleep is nothing but a succession of dreams of business I cannot do, of assistants that give me no assistance, of terrible responsibilities. I reclaimed your book, which Hazlitt has mercilessly kept, only two days ago, and have made shift to read it again with shattered brain. It does not lose—rather some parts have come out with a prominence I did not perceive before—but such was my aching head yesterday (Sunday), that the book was like a mountain landscape to one that should walk on the edge of a precipice; I perceived beauty dizzily. Now, what I would say is, that I see no prospect of a quiet half-day, or hour even, till this week and the next are past. I then hope to get four weeks' absence, and if *then* is time enough to begin, I will most gladly do what is required, though I feel my inability, for my brain is always desultory, and

snatches off hints from things, but can seldom follow a "work" methodically. But that shall be no excuse. What I beg you to do is, to let me know from Southey, if that will be time enough for the "Quarterly," *i. e.*, suppose it done in three weeks from this date (19th Sept.): if not, it is my bounden duty to express my regret, and decline it. Mary thanks you, and feels highly grateful for your "Patent of Nobility," and acknowledges the author of "The Excursion" as the legitimate fountain of honour. We both agree, that, to our feeling, Ellen is best as she is. To us there would have been something repugnant in her challenging her Penance as a dowry; the fact is explicable, but how few are those to whom it would have been rendered explicit. The unlucky reason of the detention of "The Excursion" was Hazlitt, for whom M. Burney borrowed it, and I only got it on Friday. His remarks had some vigour in them;* particularly something about an old ruin being *too modern for your Primeval Nature, and about a lichen;* I forget the passage, but the whole wore an air of

* This refers to an article of Hazlitt on "The Excursion" in the "Examiner," very fine in passages, but more characteristic of the critic than descriptive of the poem.

despatch. That objection which M. Burney had imbibed from him about Voltaire, I explained to M. B. (or tried) exactly on your principle of its being a characteristic speech.* That it was no settled comparative estimate of Voltaire with any of his own tribe of buffoons—no injustice, even if *you* spoke it, for I dared say you never could relish "Candide." I know I tried to get through it about a twelvemonth since, and couldn't for the dullness. Now I think I have a wider range in buffoonery than you. Too much toleration perhaps.

I finish this after a raw ill-baked dinner fast gobbled up to set me off to office again, after working there till near four. O how I wish I were a rich man, even though I were squeezed camel-fashion at getting through that needle's eye that is spoken of in the *Written Word.*

* The passage in which the copy of "Candide," found in the apartment of the Recluse, is described as "the dull production of a scoffer's brain,"—which had excited Hazlitt to energetic vindication of Voltaire from the charge of dulness. Whether the work, written in mockery of human hopes, be dull, I will not venture to determine; but I do not hesitate, at any risk, to avow a conviction that no book in the world is more adapted to make a good man wretched.

Apropos; is the Poet of "The Excursion" a Christian? or is it the Pedlar and the Priest that are?

I find I miscalled that celestial splendour of the mist going off, a *sunset*. That truly shows my inaccuracy of head.

Do, pray, indulge me by writing an answer to the point of time mentioned above, or *let Southey*. I am ashamed to go bargaining in this way, but indeed I have no time I can reckon on till the first week in October. God send I may not be disappointed in that! Coleridge swore in a letter to me he would review "The Excursion" in the "Quarterly." Therefore, though *that* shall not stop me, yet if I can do anything, *when* done, I must know of him if he has anything ready, or I shall fill the world with loud exclaims.

I keep writing on, knowing the postage is no more for much writing, else so fagged and dispirited I am with cursed India House work, I scarce know what I do. My left arm reposes on "The Excursion." I feel what it would be in quiet. It is now a sealed book.

The next letter was written after the fatal critique was despatched to the Editor, and before its appearance.

TO MR. WORDSWORTH.

DEAR W.

Your experience about tailors seems to be in point blank opposition to Burton, as much as the author of "The Excursion" does, *toto cælo*, differ in his notion of a country life, from the picture which W. H. has exhibited of the same. But, with a little explanation, you and B. may be reconciled. It is evident that he confined his observation to the genuine native London Tailor. What freaks tailor-nature may take in the country is not for me to give account of. And certainly some of the freaks recorded do give an idea of the persons in question being beside themselves, rather than in harmony with the common, moderate, self-enjoyment of the rest of mankind. A flying-tailor, I venture to say, is no more *in rerum naturâ* than a flying-horse or a Gryphon. His wheeling his airy-flight from the precipice you mention, had a parallel in the melancholy Jew who toppled from

the monument. Were his limbs ever found? Then, the man who cures diseases by words, is evidently an inspired tailor. Burton never affirmed that the art of sewing disqualified the practiser of it from being a fit organ for supernatural revelation. He never enters into such subjects. 'Tis the common, uninspired tailor which he speaks of. Again, the person who makes his smiles to be *heard*, is evidently a man under possession; a demoniac tailor. A greater hell than his own must have a hand in this. I am not certain that the cause you advocate has much reason for a triumph. You seem to me to substitute light-heartedness by a trick, or not to know the difference. I confess, a grinning tailor would shock me. Enough of tailors!

The "'scapes" of the Great God Pan, who appeared among your mountains some dozen years since, and his narrow chance of being submerged by the swains, afforded me much pleasure. I can conceive the water-nymphs pulling for him. He would have been another Hylas—W. Hylas. In a mad letter which Capel Loft wrote to M. M.* Phillips (now Sir Richard) I remember his noticing

* Monthly Magazine.

a metaphysical article of Pan, signed H., and adding, "I take your correspondent to be the same with Hylas." Hylas had put forth a pastoral just before. How near the unfounded conjecture of the certainly inspired Loft (unfounded as we thought it) was to being realised! I can conceive his being "good to all that wander in that perilous flood." One J. Scott* (I know no more) is editor of "The Champion." Where is Coleridge?

That Review you speak of, I am only sorry did not appear last quarter. The circumstances of haste and peculiar bad spirits under which it was written, would have excused its slightness and inadequacy, the full load of which I shall suffer from its lying by so long, as it will seem to have done, from its postponement. I write with great difficulty, and can scarce command my own resolution to sit at writing an hour together. I am a poor creature, but I am leaving off gin. I hope you will see good-will in the thing. I had a difficulty to perform not to make it all panegyric; I have attempted to personate a mere stranger to you; perhaps with too much strangeness. But

* Afterwards the distinguished and unfortunate editor of the London Magazine.

you must bear that in mind when you read it, and not think that I am, in mind, distant from you or your poem; but that both are close to me, among the nearest of persons and things. I do but act the stranger in the Review. Then, I was puzzled about extracts and determined upon not giving one that had been in the "Examiner;" for extracts repeated give an idea that there is a meagre allowance of good things. By this way, I deprived myself of "Sir Alfred Irthing," and the reflections that conclude his story, which are the flower of the poem. Hazlitt had given the reflections before me. *Then* it is the first review I ever did, and I did not know how long I might make it. But it must speak for itself, if Gifford and his crew do not put words in its mouth, which I expect. Farewell. Love to all. Mary keeps very bad.

C. LAMB.

The apprehension expressed at the close of the last letter was dismally verified. The following contains Lamb's first burst of an indignation which lasted amidst all his gentleness and tolerance unquenched through life:—

TO MR. WORDSWORTH.

DEAR WORDSWORTH,

I told you my Review was a very imperfect one. But what you will see in the "Quarterly" is a spurious one, which Mr. Baviad Gifford has palmed upon it for mine. I never felt more vexed in my life than when I read it. I cannot give you an idea of what he has done to it, out of spite at me, because he once suffered me to be called a lunatic in his Review.* The *language* he has altered throughout. Whatever inadequateness it had to its subject, it was, in point of composition, the prettiest piece of prose I ever writ; and so my sister (to whom alone I read the MS.) said. That charm, if it had any, is all gone: more than a third of the substance is cut away, and that not all from one place, but *passim*, so as to make utter nonsense. Every warm expression is changed for a nasty cold one.

* In alluding to Lamb's note on the great scene of "The Broken Heart," where Calantha dances on, after hearing at every pause of some terrible calamity, a writer in the "Quarterly" had affected to excuse the writer as a "maniac;" a suggestion which circumstances rendered most cruel.

I have not the cursed alteration by me; I shall never look at it again; but for a specimen, I remember I had said the poet of "The Excursion" "walks through common forests as through some Dodona or enchanted wood, and every casual bird that flits upon the boughs, like that miraculous one in Tasso, but in language more piercing than any articulated sounds, reveals to him far higher love-lays." It is now (besides half-a-dozen alterations in the same half-dozen lines) "but in language more *intelligent* reveals to him;"—that is one I remember.

But that would have been little, putting his shoemaker phraseology (for he was a shoemaker) instead of mine, which has been tinctured with better authors than his ignorance can comprehend; —for I reckon myself a dab at *prose*;—verse I leave to my betters: God help them, if they are to be so reviewed by friend or foe as you have been this quarter! I have read "It won't do." * But worse than altering words; he has kept a few members

* Though the article on "The Excursion," in the "Edinburgh Review" commenced "This will never do!" it contained ample illustrations of th author's genius, and helped the world to disprove its oracular beginning.

only of the part I had done best, which was to explain all I could of your "Scheme of Harmonies," as I had ventured to call it, between the external universe and what within us answers to it. To do this, I had accumulated a good many short passages, rising in length to the end, weaving in the extracts as if they came in as a part of the text naturally, not obtruding them as specimens. Of this part a little is left, but so as, without conjuration, no man could tell what I was driving at. A proof of it you may see (though not judge of the whole of the injustice) by these words. I had spoken something about "natural methodism;" and after follows, "and *therefore* the tale of Margaret should have been postponed" (I forget my words, or his words); now his reasons for postponing it are as deducible from what goes before, as they are from the 104th Psalm. The passage whence I deduced it, has vanished, but clapping a colon before a *therefore* is always reason enough for Mr. Baviad Gifford to allow to a reviewer that is not himself. I assure you my complaints are founded. I know how sore a word altered makes one; but, indeed, of this review the whole complexion is gone. I regret only that I did not keep

a copy. I am sure you would have been pleased with it, because I have been feeding my fancy for some months with the notion of pleasing you. Its imperfection or inadequateness in size and method I knew; but for the *writing-part* of it I was fully satisfied; I hoped it would make more than atonement. Ten or twelve distinct passages come to my mind, which are gone, and what is left is, of course, the worse for their having been; the eyes are pulled out, and the bleeding sockets are left.

I read it at Arch's shop with my face burning with vexation secretly, with just such a feeling as if it had been a review written against myself, making false quotations from me. But I am ashamed to say so much about a short piece. How are *you* served! and the labours of years turned into contempt by scoundrels!

But I could not but protest against your taking that thing as mine. Every *pretty* expression (I know there were many); every warm expression (there was nothing else) is vulgarised and frozen. If they catch me in their camps again, let them spitchcock me! They had a right to do it, as no name appears to it, and Mr. Shoemaker Gifford,

I suppose, never waived a right he had since he commenced author. Heaven confound him and all caitiffs!

C. L.

The next letter is fantastically written beneath a regular official order, the words in italics being printed.

SIR,

Please to state the weights and amounts of the following Lots of

sold *Sale* 181 for

Your obedient Servant,

CHAS. LAMB.

ACCOUNTANT'S OFFICE,
26th April, 1816.*

DEAR W.

I have just finished the pleasing task of correcting the revise of the poems and letter. I hope they will come out faultless. One blunder I saw and shuddered at. The hallucinating rascal

* This is shown by the postmark to be an error; it should be 1818.

had printed *battered* for *battened*, this last not conveying any distinct sense to his gaping soul. The Reader (as they call 'em) had discovered it, and given it the marginal brand, but the substitutory *n* had not yet appeared. I accompanied his notice with a most pathetic address to the printer not to neglect the correction. I know how such a blurder would "batten at your peace." With regard to the works, the Letter I read with unabated satisfaction. Such a thing was wanted; called for. The parallel of Cotton with Burns I heartily approve. Iz. Walton hallows any page in which his reverend name appears. "Duty archly bending to purposes of general benevolence" is exquisite. The poems I endeavoured not to understand, but to read them with my eye alone, and I think I succeeded. (Some people will do that when they come out, you 'll say.) As if I were to luxuriate to-morrow at some picture-gallery I was never at before, and going by to-day by chance, found the door open, and having but five minutes to look about me, peeped in; just such a *chastised* peep I took with my mind at the lines my luxuriating eye was coursing over unrestrained, not to anticipate another day's fuller satisfaction. Coleridge is printing

"Christabel," by Lord Byron's recommendation to Murray, with what he calls a vision, "Kubla Khan," which said vision he repeats so enchantingly that it irradiates and brings heaven and elysian bowers into my parlour while he sings or says it; but there is an observation, "Never tell your dreams," and I am almost afraid that "Kubla Khan" is an owl that won't bear day-light. I fear lest it should be discovered by the lantern of typography and clear reducting to letters no better than nonsense or no sense. When I was young, I used to chant with ecstacy "MILD ARCADIANS EVER BLOOMING," till somebody told me it was meant to be nonsense. Even yet I have a lingering attachment to it, and think it better than "Windsor Forest," "Dying Christian's Address" &c. Coleridge sent his tragedy to D. L. T.; it cannot be acted this season, and by their manner of receiving, I hope he will be able to alter it to make them accept it for next. He is, at present, under the medical care of a Mr. Gilman (Killman?) at Highgate, where he plays at leaving off laud—m; I think his essentials not touched; he is very bad, but then he wonderfully picks up another day, and his face, when he repeats his verses, hath

its ancient glory; an archangel a little damaged. Will Miss H. pardon our not replying at length to her kind letter?" We are not quiet enough; Morgan is with us every day, going betwixt Highgate and the Temple. Coleridge is absent but four miles, and the neighbourhood of such a man is as exciting as the presence of fifty ordinary persons. 'Tis enough to be within the whiff and wind of his genius for us not to possess our souls in quiet. If I lived with him or the *Author of the Excursion*, I should, in a very little time, lose my own identity, and be dragged along in the current of other people's thoughts, hampered in a net. How cool I sit in this office, with no possible interruption further than what I may term *material!* There is not as much metaphysics in thirty-six of the people here as there is in the first page of Locke's "Treatise on the Human Understanding," or as much poetry as in any ten lines of the "Pleasures of Hope," or more natural "Beggar's Petition." I never entangle myself in any of their speculations. Interruptions, if I try to write a letter even, I have dreadful. Just now, within four lines, I was called off for ten minutes to consult dusty old books for the settlement of

obsolete errors. I hold you a guinea you don't find the chasm where I left off, so excellently the wounded sense closed again and was healed.

* * *

N.B.—Nothing said above to the contrary, but that I hold the personal presence of the two mentioned potent spirits at a rate as high as any; but I pay dearer; what amuses others robs me of myself; my mind is positively discharged into their greater currents, but flows with a willing violence. As to your question about work; it is far less oppressive to me than it was, from circumstances; it takes all the golden part of the day away, a solid lump, from ten to four; but it does not kill my peace as before. Some day or other I shall be in a taking again. My head aches, and you have had enough. God bless you!

C. LAMB.

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00020373

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 06 February, 2016